

# Book review

## **Trends in European Tourism Planning and Organisation**

**Carlos Costa, Emese Panyik and Dimitrios Buhalis (Eds),**

**Channel View Publications**

**Bristol,**

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This book is one of a number published by Channel View under their Aspects of Tourism series, which is designed to provide “authoritative, readable and user-friendly” sources of research. The book covers 26 chapters written by 46 authors, by mainly academics mostly based in European universities, but with contributions by academics from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland and the USA.

The book itself is split into six self explanatory sections or themes, each with four chapters, namely: territory, actors and structures, economics, policy, methods and techniques, and vision. Unsurprisingly, the focus of the book is clearly centred on describing and analysing the current state of European tourism planning and organisations and the issues facing the sector. Although written by academics who naturally draw examples from experience and knowledge in their own countries, they do try to draw out conclusions and implications from their chapters, that are applicable for Europe as a whole.

The book adopts a supply side focus on the planning and organisational issues facing the development of tourism within the European Union. The central argument of the book is that both super national and sub national organisations have emerged

at the same time, and political boundaries are increasingly seem as irrelevant in a fast changing world. This has also been accompanied by the continuing drive of globalisation, as power and authority has shifted its focus from national governments to free markets. There has also been a decline in financial support for public services, which in terms of tourism planning leads to questions about the public provision of tourism organisations, and whether there is still a role for country based national tourism organisations. Much of the book explores how planning systems can help to develop tourism in Europe, by recognising the tensions and opportunities at the interface between the political, economic and social issues at the global, transnational and local levels. If there was one message from the book, this would be that it stresses we perhaps under-rate the continuing impact of globalisation and how this influences the notion of sustainable competition.

The impact of the multiple roles played by the European Union, such as a co-ordinating organisation, regional development agency, an enabler in helping tourism enterprises, transnational policy developer, interagency partnership developer and a statistical/methodological developer and co-ordination are explored throughout the book. The various chapters highlight the complex nature and issues facing tourism in a Europe that is in a continuous state of political, economical and social flux. Where the book does succeed, is that it tries to highlight, explain and untangle the many complex issues that impact tourism, within the European context. The main conclusions are that there is a failure of policy co-ordination and a lack of a trans European Union strategic approach to the development of tourism policy issues.

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As common to all books with multiple authors focusing on a defined geographical area, the issue of duplication is always a concern, as the authors try to set the scene for their individual chapters by drawing from the same sets of information, data and statistics. Perhaps to overcome this issue, the book would benefit from a chapter that describes the nature of tourism across all of Europe, so that the individual chapters do not always cover the same issues. However, although this can be frustrating if you attempt to read the book from start to finish, it is doubtful if many readers would read the book as one would read a novel, from start to finish, as each chapter can be read alone without reference to other chapters. However, it would also be of benefit to the reader in order to better understand the context of any chapter, to read first the introduction chapter, then after the chapter of interest to the reader, to read the conclusions chapter. This reading together of three chapters makes for an interesting self-contained and cohesive dialogue.

The book offers a very useful oversight of the complexities of the political, economic and social structures of Europe, which will not only be of interest to those who live in Europe and struggle to understand its structures, but will also be useful to those from outside Europe who may not understand the need for and difficulties facing transnational tourism planning. In order to understand the development and organisation of tourism in Europe and its management by the European Union it helps to understand the meaning of voluminous acronyms used, and their listing at the start of the book was very helpful.

The criticisms of the book are all relatively minor: sometimes the diagrams are difficult to read, and sometimes the same material is repeated. As with many edited books with multiple authors, in order to help the reader understand the connections across the chapters, an index of the topics covered would have been helpful.

In terms of a general academic textbook about tourism within a European context, the book if read selectively will be of interest. The book should also be of much interest for practitioners who work in developing European wide tourism policy, as it explores the complexities in developing such policy. Much of the book covers and discusses where we are today, and presents solutions for today's issues and problems. To help in the development of our understanding of the future of tourism, the final section advances a discussion of "Vision"; this will prove useful to those interested in understanding possible future directions for the European tourism industry.

In terms of the focus of this journal, that of future related issues, the book comprehensively covers such mega trends such as knowledge management, information and communications management for destination marketing organisations and the under-researched area of the emerging new mobility patterns and employment movements in Europe. Although the study of future related issues is not the focus of the book, they are covered enough to make it an interesting read.

Finally, in terms of a recommendation to buy the book or not, the book should prove to be useful for those academics and practitioners with a general interest in European tourism and who are seeking an authoritative "a one stop source". What such readers will find particularly useful is the very comprehensive list of references at the end of each chapter, and for such readers this alone this makes the book buying. As to those who are seeking a better understanding about the future of tourism, the book should be seen as useful supplementary reading, rather than essential reading.

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