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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-03-2024-295>

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Book Review - Accepted Manuscript in the International Journal of Tourism Cities

“A Research Agenda for Urban Tourism” edited by Jan van der Borg, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022

By Dr Cristina Maxim, University of West London

“*A Research Agenda for Urban Tourism*” is an edited collection that brings together a number of scholars in urban tourism, including well-known names in the field and younger researchers who look at urban tourism from different perspectives. This book is part of the Elgar Research Agendas series, aimed at exploring certain subjects and outlining the future of research in those fields, in this case urban tourism.

The edited book comprises 15 chapters and is structured in three different parts. Part I focuses on urban tourism development, Part II on urban tourism from an international perspective, presenting several cases from different parts of the world, and Part III addresses sustainable tourism development in cities. The introductory chapter, authored by the editor Jan van der Borg, sets the scene and discusses the importance of the urban tourism phenomenon. It offers a brief evaluation of research in the field and an overview on the rest of the chapters in the book. This is followed by Part I, which consists of two chapters that introduce the reader to several key tourism trends in European city tourism (Chapter 2 authored by Bozana Zekan and Karl Wöber) and the dynamic ways that cultural tourism interacts with the changing nature of cities (Chapter 3 authored by Greg Richards).

Part II, the largest part of the book, is formed of eight chapters that focus on different cities in Europe or other parts of the world. Chapter 4 authored by Lidija Petrić and Ante Mandić, which opens this section, starts in Europe by looking at smart governance, its importance, and characteristics in several historic urban destinations in Croatia. The discussion moves on to explore community perception and residents’ attitudes in four Flemish art cities in Chapter 5, which is authored by Bart Neuts and Vincent Nijs. Venice, an important city destination in Italy and an often-used example when discussing overtourism, is the scene for Chapter 6 produced by Dario Betocchi and Nicola Camatti. The authors conclude that although the local people’s desire for change is tangible, the local government is still looking for solutions to address the challenges faced by this well-known city destination. In Chapter 7, Shirley Nieuwland, Ewout Versloot and Egbert van der Zee explore tourism development in Rotterdam. They discuss the transformation of the city over the years from an industrial port into the second most important urban tourism destination in the Netherlands, pointing to the way urban tourism should be integrated into the wider policy landscape. Continuing on the topic of new urban tourism development, in Chapter 8, Anna-Paula Jonsson and Tigran Haas turn their attention to a conflict that emerged over a new urban tourism development project in a heritage part of Stockholm, Sweden. The authors offer insights into the challenges faced when developing heritage landscapes and advocate for planning for more socially sustainable cities.

The next chapter takes us to a different part of the world, Africa, and looks at urban tourism development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The authors, Getaneh Addis Tessema and Ephrem Assefa Haile, emphasise the lack of research on cities from developing countries such as Ethiopia, and present an overview of the nature, challenges and opportunities encountered by such cities when it comes to tourism development in the region. Chapter 10 takes us to the Americas, in the United States, where Costas Spirou discusses about economic development and urban restructuring, examining tourism in cities within a broader context.

The last chapter in this section, Chapter 11, shifts the attention to the eastern hemisphere and Chinese cities. The authors, Xiang Feng, Ben Derudder and Hai Xia Zhou, focus their work on the challenges faced by cities in this part of the world and ways to differentiate the role played by these destinations as international tourism hubs.

Part III of the book brings together four chapters that consider urban tourism development policies aimed at making tourism in cities more sustainable. The first chapter in this part, Chapter 12, examines causes and tensions in European city destinations that can lead to overtourism. The authors, Ko Koens and Jeroen Klijs, note that to fully understand the impacts of tourism in cities and promote sustainable urban development, we first need to better comprehend how tourism interacts with other local developments. The following chapter looks at Barcelona in Spain, a good example for the authors (Antonio Paolo Russo, Elsa Soro and Alessandro Scarnato) to study the nexus between urban regimes, discursive practices, and tourism politics. Chapter 14 by Sebastian Zenker touches on how the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to potential changes and identifies some avenues for future research post-pandemic. The final chapter, written by the author of the book, Jan van der Borg, continues with the same theme, and presents a future research agenda for urban tourism. It also emphasises the role of sustainable tourism development in city destinations.

The book therefore presents the viewpoints of twenty-seven contributors from different countries (mostly from Europe, with a few from China, the United States and Africa) on current debates in urban tourism, offering an international perspective on challenges faced by city destinations. It includes several case studies ranging from popular destinations such as Venice and Barcelona, to smaller cities in Croatia and Belgium, and cities from developing countries such as Addis Ababa in Ethiopia that so far have received little attention from academics. The Global South receives little attention in the book; however, the editor acknowledges in the Preface that the edited collection brings together mainly contributors he worked with and met over the years.

The book is written in a clear and accessible way, and is likely to appeal to a wider audience, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers interested in the topic, and policy makers in city destinations. Overall, *“A Research Agenda for Urban Tourism”* is a welcome addition to the literature on urban tourism, an expanding field of study, adding insights into current urban tourism debates and future research towards more sustainable city destinations.

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