

Book review of Butcher, J. (Ed.) (2025). *Tourism's Horizon: Travel for the Millions*. Goodfellow Publishers Ltd. ISBN: 9781917433334, pp. 280.

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“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” — Mark Twain.

This famous line captures the core concern of this book: when millions of ordinary people travel, should tourism be seen as a problem, or as a legitimate aspiration for the many? The book is a collection of essays originally published on the *Tourism's Horizon: Travel for the Millions (TH:TM)* blog. It is divided into five parts. Through short, opinionated pieces, the contributors respond to current debates on “overtourism”, “degrowth”, “good/bad tourists”, and the power of academic discourse. On the one hand, the authors recognize the environmental and social pressures that tourism can create. On the other hand, they argue that critique should be framed in a more democratic and inclusive way. They call for critical research that rethinks tourism without simply moralizing or stigmatizing mass tourism.

The first part, Reflections, brings together edited interviews from the Tourism Interviews Project. It presents seven interviewees' views across nine questions, laying the foundation for the whole volume. It asks how tourism, modernity, development and progress can be rethought in a context dominated by the language of “crisis”, “degrowth” and “overtourism”. In response to the fourth question, Buhalis argues that growth in tourism is not guilty by nature. What matters is how economic benefits, social well-being and care for the environment are brought together again. In this view, prosperity is better judged in terms of stakeholder welfare and cultural and environmental value, rather than economic expansion alone. This position builds on MacCannell (2013) insight that tourism is a structural feature of modern society. In responses to the second and seventh questions, Hall brings “degrowth” explicitly into the discussion and doubts that Covid-19 has produced meaningful lessons for tourism—certainly not the lesson that we should travel less—while emphasising pent-up demand for travel and the sector's weak preparedness for interconnected risks. This resonates with the concerns raised by Fletcher *et al.* (2019) when they examine the tourism-degrowth debate from a political economy perspective. In the Reflections section, Aramberri warns the tourism academy about a style of critique that turns into moral prescription and the endless reiteration of normative mantras, while struggling to offer workable ways forward. If researchers see tourism only as a moral problem that needs correction and ignore its role in helping ordinary people seek rest, connection and a broader outlook, then critique itself may become a new blind spot.

The second part, Viewpoints on Freedom, comprises nine chapters that centre on tourism freedom, mobility rights, and the boundaries of governance. And third part, Viewpoints on The People, comprises ten chapters, foregrounding conceptual disputes around “ordinary tourists” and “mass tourism”, the moralisation of tourism debates, and the diversity of lived tourism experiences. On the one hand, in “*Venice and the Crisis of Travel Freedom*”, Standish discusses control measures such as the reservation system for day visitors in Venice and travel bans during the pandemic. He demonstrates how, under the language of “protecting residents” and “protecting the environment”, a form of travel freedom that was meant for the many can be reshaped into a privilege that is filtered and rationed. On the other hand, in “*The metaphoric rise of overtourism and why we should stop using the phrase*” by Michael O'Regan, “*Are British seaside resorts trending again?*” by David Jarratt, and “*What is 'mass tourism'? And what's the problem?*” by Vilhelmiina Vainikka, conceptual history and local case studies are used to criticize the metaphorical politics that describe tourists as a “flood” or a “plague” in media and academia. They stress the positive role of mass tourism in the democratization of leisure, and in shaping local feelings and identities. Through examples such as social tourism, ecotourism designed for the many, parkrun tourism and wartime volunteer travel, these chapters further show how ordinary people, even under limited resources and uncertain conditions, still use travel practices to build well-being, community and resilience. This echoes Cheer and Lew (2017) work on the links between tourism, resilience and

human well-being. It also helps to move the “tourist” back from being a managed object to being a rights-bearing subject and social actor.

The fourth part of the book centers on “tourism and development” and includes eight chapters. It does not focus on one single case, but on a whole set of competing ideas about the future. It begins with a critique of Bhutan’s “Gross National Happiness” in “*Happiness—Bhutan’s Gift to the World?*” by Butcher. Butcher argues that “degrowth” and “happiness-based development” are not pure moral high ground. They are political projects shaped by state elites and by Western discourse. This connects to Saarinen (2013) point about the power embedded in sustainability narratives. On this basis, in “*Conservation, climate and culture challenge food tourism in Botswana*” by Chatibura, “*Preserving Nigeria’s cultural heritage through authenticity in tourism, education and technology*” by Osinaike, “*The unique case of St Helena: ‘a breath of fresh air’*” by Mittens, and “*‘No man is an island’: Let’s talk tourism and transportation infrastructure*” by Bertolucci, these cases are not just scattered stories. They are used to show that development is about infrastructure investment and market opportunities, but also about how local cultures struggle to position themselves under global pressure from environmental and dietary ethics. Rather than romanticizing “low impact” or “non-development”, this section is closer to the stance of Bianchi (2018). It accepts that tourism brings inequality and environmental costs. But it argues that the real challenge is how to make development higher in quality and more just, instead of treating “less development” as a simple moral answer.

The fifth part of the book turns the focus back onto the tourism academy itself and consists of five chapters. It uses academic affairs as an entry point to discuss knowledge politics and the mission of education. In “*Aiming high with heart and imagination*” by Wen, he first argues that academic freedom is not an abstract slogan. It is a field of practice that is being eroded by managerialism, policy pressures, peer exclusion and attacks on social media. Then, in “*21st century tourism and the academic voice*” by Schweinsberg, he reflects on his own experience of doing tourism research as a Christian scholar. He suggests that an academic voice always carries the values and identity of the researcher. What matters is not to pretend to be neutral, but to make space for different positions to be heard in open debate. In “*Language Skills in Tourism: The Anglosphere Needs to Appreciate Them*” by Thomas, the post-Brexit United Kingdom serves as a case study in language gaps. Thomas demonstrates how tourism education has long sidelined foreign languages and intercultural competencies, undermining students’ capacity to act as effective “cultural brokers.” This marginalization, she argues, signals a retreat from higher education’s broader humanistic mission.

Overall, this book offers a clear set of counterviews on several of the most contested themes in current tourism studies. On the one hand, it defends mass tourism, development and growth, and resists the easy move of equating ordinary tourists with “overtourism”. On the other hand, it puts freedom and the right to mobility back at the center of debate, and, unusually, brings academic freedom and knowledge politics into discussions of tourism’s future.

As a collection that began life as a blog, its strength lies in sharp arguments and accessible prose. For the same reason, it also has limits: the chapters can feel somewhat fragmented, and some contributions are more driven by stance than by empirical evidence. Even so, it provides valuable food for thought and suggestion of future research for tourism scholars, graduate students, and practitioners concerned with tourism policy and destination governance. In terms of how it is best used, it is more suitable as a discussion-led supplementary reader or reference source for upper-level undergraduate and postgraduate teaching than as a fully structured core textbook; readers may approach it as an “issue pack” that sparks debate and comparison across positions. Future work that tests these counter-

narratives in a more systematic empirical way would help to deepen, and also to challenge, the critical conversation that this volume sets in motion.

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