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Book review

Tomorrow's Tourist: Scenarios & Trends, I. Yeoman. Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford (2008). (pbk)357, ISBN: 978-0-08-045339-2

Ian Yeoman has developed a strong reputation within tourism as possibly our only specialised scenario planner and this book brings together his thoughts into a single place. It is a highly readable book that moves swiftly through 24 chapters and across the issues that he sees shaping the future of tourism up to the year 2030. The role of the 'future foundation' in providing data from the Changing Lives survey is significant and there are occasional slippages between the I of Ian and the We of the Future Foundation which is irritating.

The account takes the reader back through a version of the history of tourism which is an interesting account, as much for what it reveals about the author as for the points which are highlighted. As the first section continues Yeoman reveals the trends that he sees driving the development of tourism onwards. These are: Globalisation and Competition; Prosperity and affordability; The Middle Class Squeeze; Accessibility; Events; Cultural Capital; Climate Change; Age and Longevity; Science and Discovery; Anxiety about Health and Safety; The Experience Economy; and Perceptions of Luxury. There will be those amongst you reading this who are already saying 'oh yes! we know that'. If you are then I hope you are right and I hope you are comfortable in your own interpretation of what these themes mean now and what they will mean to the future of tourism. I teach my module on current issues and think I have a fair view of what they are but this book demonstrated just how fragile and subjective that grasp can be. There is an abundance of material here that has relevance within and beyond the specific arguments that are constructed here.

It is also obvious that the book was produced before the onset of the current economic hardships, probably officially a recession by the time this review is published. There is a website which accompanies the book (<http://www.tomorrowstourist.com>) and this will probably carry the updates that futurologists must need to make from time to time. Events have a way of overtaking our thinking, for instance with the chapter on Macau which predicts that Macau will overtake Las Vegas as the world's number one gambling resort has already happened. At least it has if you only measure the claim in quantifiable terms, I suspect that Las Vegas will not let it rest until the subjective as well as the objective challenge has been won. However the nature of the book can be demonstrated by the way that Yeoman does not get drawn into specific local difficulties but looks at the underlying trends that support the argument he is putting forward. Therefore it is important to recognise that whilst the economic collapse will inevitably reduce the UNWTO's and the WTTC's figures for expected growth rates, there is an important point in Yeoman's assertion that the evidence suggests that the rich get richer. This is evidenced on the data from the last economic crises both in Europe and with the Asian tiger economies – where the patterns of inequality grew and the impacts were felt very differently by the prosperous and the poor.

The book has relevance to everyone working in tourism, no matter what role they occupy and I have discussed this book with fellow academics and practitioners. One interesting debating point has been Yeoman's use of an approach based around the exploration of a scenario about a future tourist – for instance Pete and Mandy in Chapter 8 who facilitate the debate about second homes in tourism. 'My Life in Pogradeci' introduces the opportunities and constraints found in the development of second home tourism – and some have said this trivialises and over simplifies the accounts that are offered. For me, I do not see the problem. There is a role for storytelling in developing the critical accounts of topics and what these artificial cases do is provide the grounds for exploring the issues. The stories are not the point, but the points are made through the stories.

What seems to be missing is the story about Ian who wants to work in tourism and advise national tourism agencies (and I suspect anyone who will listen!) about what the future of tourism will look like by 2030. It would have been wonderful to see a reflective and reflexive account of the ways in which futurologists work. We see the fertile outpourings but it is difficult to establish how these accounts are warranted. A chapter based on how you take the data and work on it to produce a coherent and credible account would have been a fascinating addition to the book. It would also have been useful for students to be able to see how the assumptions are more than that; where do they come from, how are they challenged and how do they become established as a part of the data set that a futurologist can base their predictions on.

You will probably read this book with a mixture of reactions from sadness, anger to excitement and, please Professor Yeoman take this in the spirit it is meant, possibly laughing out loud (and it is not often you can review a tourism book and admit that!) There will be those who are moved to anger because they disagree with the treatment and/or the conclusions drawn about certain subjects. What is more important is that this book is putting those arguments out there for debate and contestation. If we are move towards a tourism that is based on sustainable development then we have to engage in the sort of thinking that is illustrated in this book. The cover carries a quote which suggests that the book demonstrates "thinking outside the goldfish bowl", I hope it does not. These are arguments which appear very familiar in my part of the bowl and they make use of the sense of dynamics and determinations that are part of our work and of our world but they are combined in new and interesting ways. I would not subscribe to all of them but I am grateful for having this elaboration to bounce my ideas against and to test out both mine and Yeoman's views.

Alan Clarke
University of Pannonia, 8201 Veszprém, Hungary
E-mail address: clarke@turizmus.uni-pannon.hu

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