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Book review

G. Baldacchino (Eds.), Archipelago Tourism: Policies and Practices, 2015Ashgate, Farnham, 2015,, ISBN: 978 1 4724 2430 3 (£70.00 (hardback))

On reviewing this book I first need to declare that I am likely biased. This is firstly because I have long been particularly interested in how transport systems have developed in (actually mostly within) island contexts, and secondly because I am an inveterate island tourist – i.e. one who visits islands specifically because they are islands. Consequently I am generally excited by any publication with an island and transport flavour, and fortunately this volume of edited works did not disappoint in this regard.

In terms of focus, the innovative aspect of this book is to look at tourism issues through the lens of the archipelago, i.e. the group of islands, rather than only of individual islands. This gives rise to an additional layer of complexity, most obviously around the inter-relationships between the member islands of each archipelago not only in terms of politics and economics, but also with regards to cultural, environmental and other aspects.

Structurally, the book begins with a foreword, an editorial and a review essay – each of which provides a general introduction to and justification of the importance of the general topic area of tourism in the archipelago context. Whilst interesting enough to read however, there was a degree of overlap in what was written here and I did not quite understand exactly what each chapter was meant to add to the storyline.

Subsequently the book is formed of four main sections that are then divided into chapters. Specifically, these sections are geographically organised according to the ocean to which each archipelago case study belongs, namely:

- The Mediterranean Sea (Aegean, Malta-Gozo-Comino, Sardinia);
- The Atlantic Ocean (Azores, Cape Verde, Guernsey, Faroe, Caribbean, Bahamas);
- The Pacific Ocean (Fiji, Hawaii); and
- The Indian Ocean (Maldives, Mascarenes).

In general I found the case study chapters to be well evidenced and easy to read, as well as providing sufficient context for the reader to grasp how and why tourism had developed as it had in each case. They were also fairly well aligned in the topics to be discussed – a difficult task to accomplish in an edited book with so many contributors. In particular, I enjoyed reading about how the Faroe Islands had improved their inter-island accessibility – by constructing several fixed links at enormous cost – and I was intrigued by the current situation in the Caribbean in terms of the difficulties faced in operating intra-regional transport services.

Finally there is a concluding chapter that attempts to pull everything together. This it does tolerably well, though it is a rather brief treatment at only eight pages long. In particular, I think this chapter might have benefitted from a series of recommendations for policy makers and practitioners – as one might perhaps have expected given the subtitle of the book.

Overall, this work is mostly well constructed – the one minor comment I would make being that one of the initial scoping chapters might have been better re-fashioned as an additional discussion piece and relocated towards the end of the book. This, I feel would have helped both with clarifying the introductory section and with drawing together the threads within the book more satisfactorily. Otherwise I felt the book provides some very interesting cases of how tourism has developed in a series of very specific contexts, and would therefore form a useful sourcebook for students of tourism and perhaps too of transport geography.

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