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Rezensionen / Book Reviews

**Hitchcock, M., King, V. T., & Parnwell, M. (Eds.). (2009).
Tourism in Southeast Asia: Challenges and New Directions.
Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press. ISBN: 978-87-7694-033-1. 358 pages.**

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The increasing importance of tourism in the countries of South-East Asia and its changing nature from, amongst others, social, political, or anthropological points of view have created the grounds and necessity for a publication that brings together – as the title illustrates – current challenges and new directions in tourism in South-East Asia. After their previous co-editing of *Tourism in South-East Asia* (1993), Hitchcock, King, and Parnwell have published a fundamental book for academics, researchers, and friends of South-East Asia with a fine selection of contributions.

The volume comprises sixteen chapters, with contributions on different South-East Asian countries, e.g. Thailand, Indonesia, or Vietnam, written by authors from various disciplines. Despite the variety of topics, the regional focus seems to be put primarily on Indonesia, especially Bali – taking away room from other countries such as Malaysia or Burma. Still, the topics covered are broad, ranging from anthropological insights and arts to policy-making, sex tourism, political ecology, gender, and terrorism. Instead of referring to widely researched aspects of those topics, the authors surprise with interesting, for the reader maybe even unknown, issues. Gender issues and sex tourism in the borderlands of China and Vietnam for example – as focused on by Yuk Wah Chan in chapter 10 – illuminate a different perspective on sex tourism compared to the Thai sex industry and offer a glance at some of the new challenges the region faces. A special emphasis is put on culture, especially in the first two chapters. Victor King's work offers an immersion into anthropology and tourism in



South-East Asia, building on key researchers in the area, such as Erik Cohen or Michel Picard. His contribution raises interesting questions about authenticity, agency and the dynamics of culture, power and identity. It concludes with the claim that anthropology should “embrace . . . the study of culture at the local, national, and the global levels” (p. 68). Hence the study of anthropology gains new importance in tourism research, where it faces challenges within the complexity of the tourism systems.

Kathleen Adams continues with her investigation of handicrafts and art in Indonesia and the forces they are exposed to through buyers and sellers in the age of globalisation and modernity. The commoditisation of handicrafts seems to be a common phenomenon in the countries of South-East Asia with fake sculptures, statues, and manufactures luring the authenticity-seeking tourists into spending money. However, instead of a loss in value, culture experiences the transformation of meanings and handicrafts seem to be “inspired by foreign tourists’ expectations of what ‘tribal art’ should look like” (p. 81). Adams underpins her research by the use of various pictures – regrettably the only author doing so in the whole book.

The next two chapters focus on the Bali bombings of 2002 with I Nyoman Darma Putra and Michael Hitchcock looking at tourists and their feelings of insecurity on the one hand and illuminating the motives of the bombers and the political context on the other hand. They locate the reason for the terrorists choosing tourist areas for their attacks in their aspiration for international publicity, which did indeed result from tourists being the target of those bombings. The chapter offers a broad and comparative approach to viewing the Bali bombings as they are connected with the bombings in 2005. Subsequently, Michel Picard’s contribution offers insights into the Balinese culture and people, with the latter attributing the reasons for the bombings to their society: The mere fact of opening the country to globalisation through – above all international tourism – is considered by many Balinese as the major cause for the attack. The new *Ajeg Bali* tourism strategy, which was created in the aftermath of the bombings, therefore mirrors the rising determination of the Balinese “to avoid being overcome by the cultural hegemony of globalization, with its trail of consumerism, commercialism and commodification” (p. 113) and to rediscover their ‘Balinese-ness’, i.e. their Balinese identity. Generally speaking, several of the contributors focus on Bali, concentrating largely on the Bali bombings, which can be partly redundant for the reader. Equally, the 2004 Tsunami constantly serves as a basis for the analysis in

various chapters, which raises concerns about a better linking between the contents of the individual contributions.

The book continues with some chapters highlighting economics and policy-making in South-East Asia. Furthermore, challenges are discussed, including catastrophes such as the tsunami in 2004 or sustainability issues, which need to be dealt with not only on a local but more on a global level and demand the cooperation of and effort from various nations.

In chapter 7, Jonathan Bennett continues with a focus on the private tourism business in Vietnam, highlighting power redistributions from the central government to the regional level and the difficulties associated with these developments. Due to the vague wording of government directives and regulations, the interpretation is left to regional authorities, so-called 'provincial people's committees', making *quan he xa hoi* – the cultivation of social ties to those officials – of central importance for entrepreneurs in Vietnam. In the following chapter David Harrison and Steven Schipani present Laos as a positive example of how tourism can serve as a tool for development and poverty alleviation by means of, amongst others, international cooperation between players such as the central government and aid agencies (for example SNV, the Netherlands Development Organisation). The fact that Laos is only as of recently experiencing growth rates in tourism means that it can still learn from the mistakes its neighbouring countries (such as Thailand) made in tourism development.

Shinji Yamashita's analysis of Japanese tourists in South-East Asia presents a rather new perspective on tourism in the region (chapter 9). From healing tourism in Bali to lifestyle tourism in Thailand, the chapter outlines the motivation of Japanese to visit South-East Asia. Even though Japanese tourists consider the region to be less oriental than some Western tourists, they regard it as "a nostalgic place where they can find what they have lost in Japan's modernization" (p. 201). This is particularly relevant and valuable, as Western publications often tend to ignore a more regional viewpoint due to their Eurocentric perspective.

Chapter 10 brings to light gender issues in the China-Vietnam borderlands: Yuk Wah Chan's research shows that the sexual relationships between Chinese men and Vietnamese women cannot be condemned instantly without a closer investigation of the underlying meanings and without putting it into the broader context of modernity and globalisation. The topic of sex tourism is included in the volume with a

contribution by Heidi Dahles who discusses the phenomenon of women looking for male gigolos and sexual encounters. She moves away from the usual angle of female prostitutes in Thailand and uses a case study of Yogyakarta to illustrate 'romance tourism'. By introducing a rather novel perspective on sexual commercial relations, she undoubtedly contributes to research in this area. Nevertheless, the sex-tourism dilemma in countries such as Thailand is not a major issue in the book.

The last chapters of the volume are dedicated to environmental and policy issues with Michael Parnwell looking at how political frameworks can work to achieve sustainable tourism development in South-East Asia. He considers sustainable tourism as a phenomenon based on cooperation between private and public entities, NGOs, and others to focus on new forms of tourism, such as 'pro-poor', 'eco-', or 'community-based' tourism. According to Parnwell, a shift in power distribution has taken place, which has contributed to capacity building and empowered communities. However, tourism actors in South-East Asia still have to implement various measures in order to contribute to fair and equal tourism development. The ecotourism sector is further discussed by Janet Cochrane, who addresses its challenges as well as realities in Indonesia. From a political ecology perspective, Cochrane focuses on commercialisation and selling ecotourism as a product based on nature. Thereby the importance of community participation is often overlooked.

Henning Borchers (chapter 14) continues the regional emphasis on Indonesia with a discussion of tourism development in Komodo National Park. He points to the importance of money generation to national parks as an engine for survival and sustainability and discusses the significance of community involvement. In the case of Komodo National Park "there has been a disproportionate emphasis on meeting the goals of resource protection, conservation and development of nature tourism, to the disadvantage of the livelihood needs of local communities" (p. 285). Mark and Joanna Hampton finally assess the environmental impacts of backpacker tourism on the fragile island of Gili Trawangan in Indonesia. They name repercussions, both on the terrestrial area as well as on coral reefs, and suggest stricter regulations in terms of conservation. Regulations seem necessary due to the upcoming shift from backpacker to conventional or mass tourism, which could damage the environment immensely and contribute to a loss of its attractiveness.

The conclusion by the editors presents a perfectly adequate ending to the work

and elucidates the status quo of research undertaken in the respective disciplines included. Also, it compares the editors' 1993 book with this new publication by pointing to the similarity in topics, which have been further explored in the meantime. Therefore the angle has shifted to current challenges and developments of tourism in South-East Asia. By focusing amongst others on East Asian tourists travelling to South-East Asia, *Tourism in Southeast Asia: Challenges and New Directions* shows a necessary shift away from a Eurocentric perspective. One might argue that a focus on disciplines such as economics or history is missing; however, the editors have still chosen a good selection of contributions and specify the limitations of the volume in the introduction as well as the conclusion. The capture of the phenomenon of globalisation is an essential feature of the volume, whose excellence is due to the interconnectedness of the chapters and disciplines, but also due to the accentuation of future developments and research necessities. Overall, *Tourism in Southeast Asia: Challenges and New Directions* is a comprehensive publication contributing to tourism research and should not be missing from the bookshelf of academics or friends of South-East Asia interested in the tourism discourse.

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