Book review

Wildlife Tourism Futures. Encounters with Wild, Captive and Artificial Animals

> The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated. Mahatma Gandhi. (p. 140)

The book explores how wildlife tourism may look in the future; a topic which is highly relevant and long overdue. The stated aim is to aid the reader in rethinking wildlife tourism with a view to adopting new approaches for this sector as it faces significant challenges in the future. The relatively short, highly readable book is definitively future focussed. There are few, if any resources looking at future scenarios in the wildlife tourism space, making this book an important addition to the tourism futures landscape.

Consisting of 13 chapters in three broad themes, each with 3–4 essays from a range of 17 authors (unfortunately none from Africa which has significant wild life resources and is heavily reliant on wild life tourism) the book focuses primarily on captive and artificial wildlife with little mention of tourism in and to wild safari parks such as is the norm in Africa. Nevertheless, chapters focussing on marine tourism do cover the concept of non-captive wild animals and the concepts discussed throughout are very relevant to all in the wildlife tourism field.

Part 1: Paths towards the futures of wildlife tourism

The first chapter explores *Wildlife Tourism in (Un)sustainable Futures* looking at three future scenarios discussing the effects of climate change with a social futures lens.

Rabbits in the Wild: Close Encounters on an Equal Footing explores the wild-domestic continuum looking at initially domesticated animals now feral thus blurring the notion of what is wild and what is domesticated. Two scenarios are explored, an anthropocentric view and an eco-feminism view.

A very interesting chapter, *Representing Wild Animals to Humans: The Ethical Future of Wildlife Tourism*, focuses on wildlife tourism in captive settings. As captive animals are increasingly the only way that the majority of people can see a (previously found only in the wild) animal, this chapter is an important read for anyone engaged with animal encounters whether live or virtual. For this reviewer, the chapter raised the socio-cultural aspect of wildlife tourism which is only hinted at in this book. In Africa, for example, with large game reserves at hand, it is uncommon to refer to animals in any form of captivity as wild. And this raises the point – how will future generations define wild? Never the less the chapter is well worth a read and introduces the concept of Disneyisation of wild life tourism.

Part 2: Humananimal encounters

Selfie safaris are explored in the chapter *The Rise of Selfie Safaris and the Future(s) of Wildlife Tourism.* Positing scenarios that work with the three main actors in tourism (the tourism industry, the tourist and government) this chapter explores the problematic proximity between animal and human that a selfie necessitates. *The Future of Captive Wildlife: Useful*

and Enjoyable for Animals and Visitors? ends with a vision of a 2050 visit to a zoo where the site is designed with animal and not human needs in mind. This explores zoos where education and entertainment are at the forefront of the experience. For example, larger enclosures may be what the animals need but implies more walking for humans. The chapter explores the use of VR and AR in zoos which may provide solutions that are animal rather than human centric (e.g. viewing nocturnal animals or animals that burrow and are not easily seen and observed). More scenarios are explored in the chapter *Promises and Pitfalls in the Future of Sustainable Wildlife Interpretation.* Three trends are explored to create the scenarios, namely, the rise of mobile communication and social media, the internet of things and the changing international market (in particular the Chinese and Indian international tourist). Mindful visitors are seen as an important prerequisite for wildlife tourism experiences (WTE) as visitors are encouraged to engage with wildlife experiences developed from alternative perspectives in particular from the animal's perspective.

Provocative narrative scenarios are explored in the final chapter of this book section. *Interspecies Communication and Encounters with Orcas* explores what conversations may look like in the future if animals were to become the co-managers and co-developers of tourism activities. What value do animals actually see (or get) from human encounters? The idea of interspecies communication opens up a wide range of future scenarios. What would animals say to humans if they could communicate with us? A useful thought experiment indeed.

Part 3: Technology advancements

A utopian future scenario is described for whale-based tourism based on researched signals and drivers of change. Five change drivers of whale

watching were explored in the chapter *Safeguarding Sustainable Futures for Marine Wildlife Tourism.* The authors advocate that successful eco–innovations will be used by high profile and highly profitable tourism companies acting as first movers towards more sustainable wildlife tourism experiences. The following chapter looks at non-human animal agency – which the authors admit is a complex concept. The chapter explores, via the use of technology, placing the animal, in this case a sled dog, as the key actor in the future. *Designing Future Wildlife Experiences* is an interesting discussion on technology and its interface with animal-actor agency. How will zoos and aquariums evolve in the future is the question posed in *The Future of Captive Animals and Tourism.* The future of captive animals for human viewing is dependent on how different cultures think about animal well-fare and wellbeing. Zoos and aquaria remain very popular with 700 million visits globally in 2019. The chapter presented a promotional zoo brochure from 2070 for a zoo that houses cloned animals. The final chapter in this section, *Will Cryptogovernance Save the Wildlife Tourism Commons?* provides an extremely interesting futures view on the role that blockchain technology can play in remote non-extractive wild life tourism where property rights to wildlife, a common good, is not clear. Tokenising wildlife interactions is the future solution proposed where by rights are allocated each time wild life is "used". Blockchain technology can help with giving a true estimate of the value of wildlife. An extremely thought-provoking chapter to end with and a tech trend one that this reviewer will be watching very closely.

Considering that by 2050, 68% of the world will live in urban areas; what is perceived as "wild" may be different as to how we perceive wild today. In the future wildlife experiences may be limited; as they already are for many

people in urban environments. Wildlife, both captive and non-captive, experiences may become increasingly rare and thus become exclusive and expensive experiences open only to few people. How will this affect wildlife tourism in the future?

As a reader from the global south, based in Africa, I am particularly interested in the future of wildlife tourism as much of tourism in Africa is predicated on this. A glaring gap was the lack of discussion on wildlife tourism in emerging economies with no case studies presented from Africa which is at the forefront of wildlife conservation and wildlife tourist experiences. There is an acknowledgement that cultures view animal-interactions and wildlife tourism very differently. This warrants further exploration particularly considering that India and China have the fastest growing international outbound tourism markets.

There is a heavy reliance on scenarios as a futures method, although they are informed using a wide range of base tools. Never the less, an exploration of the socio-human approach would be important as different cultures, demographics and urban vs non-urbanised visitors will have different narratives about what is considered wild and what is an acceptable and desirable animal-human interaction.

Wildlife Tourism Futures is an important exploration of the future of encounters with wild (and previously wild) animals and is a highly recommended read for anyone in the animal and wildlife tourism field.

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