

### **Food Tourism and Regional Development. Networks, products and trajectories.**

C. M. Hall and S. Gössling (eds). Routledge, Abingdon (2016). pp. 298. US \$160.00, UK £90.00, €no price quoted, ISBN 978-1-138-91292-2 (hbk). US \$38.47, UK £24.49, € no price quoted, ISBN 978-1-315-69169-5 (eBook).

This is the eighth book in the series of Routledge Studies of Gastronomy, Food and Drink edited by Michael Hall, this one being specifically edited by Hall and Gössling. Overall I think that this is an excellent book bringing together a strong review of literature and theory with a series of interesting case studies.

One of the specific strengths of the book is the introduction, which covers much ground and, for those who are not familiar with it, will give rapid insights into how the, primarily, post-productivist food movement can work with tourism to aid regional development. This section is a very good overview, but should also be read critically. For example, as Hall and Gössling point out, any discussion of food production, food and the tourists, and food tourism needs to take place within an understanding that the, "*reality is that food producers are operating in a multifunctional agricultural regime in which global agribusiness corporations continue to dominate.*" (p. 4). There may well be, "*a greater focus on sustainability, the environment and the relocalisation food as a response to the perceived social, economic and directly failings of the global food system.....*" (p 6) and this is an important narrative in the study of post-productivism and regional development, however, most of the food and drink consumed by most tourists, comes via more 'mainstream productivist' routes. Other ideas deserve challenging. For example there are many local food systems that have not been '*deliberately formed*', but evolved, yet are still, "*characterised by '...a close producer-consumer relationship within a designated place or local area.'*" (p 10). The idea that, "*Ethical consumerism is generally associated with the consumption of goods and services, the production of which **does not result in** harm to people, animals or the environment.*" (p 11) is not easy to justify specifically in the context of food and drink; agriculture is all about the subduing and manipulation of nature. Nor is the idea that local food systems are necessarily more sustainable than those based on global supply chains. For example a number of studies have suggested that lamb produced in New Zealand and exported to the UK will have a smaller carbon foot print than lamb produced in the UK (AEA Technology 2008; AEA Environment 2005; also see Beer and Lemmer 2011). Having said this, overall, I consider it to be a very good introduction to the theoretical context for a series of very interesting case studies.

It is useful, when looking at edited volumes, to gain an overview of where the contributors are based. 11 are from Europe (UK 3, France, Norway, Sweden 4, Ireland 2) 9 from Australia and Zealandia (New Zealand 4, Australia 5), 5 from Asia (Malaysia, Hong Kong 2, Japan, South Korea) 1 from North America (Mexico) and 1 from Africa (South Africa). The chapters reflect a slightly different geographical distribution in that 9 draw their data from Europe (Sweden 3, Ireland 2, UK, France, Italy, Spain) 5 are based on North America (United States 2, Canada, Jamaica, Mexico) 4 Asia (Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea) 1 Australia (Australia) 1 Africa (South Africa). It would have been interesting to have heard more from Africa and from South America.

The central chapters are split into four sections. The first section explores *Local food systems, tourism and trajectories of regional development*. It is based on case studies from Sweden, Australia, Malaysia the USA and Ireland. Each chapter contains a review of literature leading onto an empirical study and appropriate reflection. I view this book not only as an academic, but a practitioner who has been directly involved in local and regional food development. It is therefore heartening to see what can be done in terms of developing local food systems and linking these to tourism and regional development, though often this requires public sector facilitation that is not universal available.

The second section examines, *The cultural economy of food and tourism*. Here there are some evocative accounts of food and place including noodle tourism in Japan; salted fish and Chinese herbal medicine in the Sheung Wan area of Hong Kong; slow food in South Korea and the regional foods of Devon in the UK. With regard to the last of these examples I have to declare an interest. This is my home area and Paul Cleave's invocation of Laver (*Porphyra umbilicalis*, a type of sea weed), Mazzards (*Prunus avium*, a cultivated 'wild' cherry), clotted cream and Clovelly herrings tugged at my soul. For me, 'this 'soul tugging' encapsulated the nature of this section; that sense of place, which those who live there live; those that have left, long for; and those that visit often seek to uncover and experience. The complex interaction of relationships, place and food is the subject of the final two chapters in this section which examine rural Jamaica and the migration of tastes across borders in the case of Mexico and the USA.

The third group of chapters looks at, *Products, regions and regionality*. A regional review of old world wine tourism, craft beer and tourism in South Africa, and cheese in Galicia all provide examples of the way that government, the tourism, hospitality and food industries, tourists and food interact in a larger geographical area. The relationships are complex, and not necessarily as intimate as in the previous examples. Within this section there is a

reflective chapter by John Mulcahy that questions whether regionality really matters within the context of Ireland. As Mulcahy indicates, historically Ireland has had a difficult relationship with food, but is now experiencing, in many ways, a renaissance. Within this context regionality is important, however, the question of who defines regionality and to whom and how is it presented, are important ones. There is also an interesting exploration of the potential tensions with regard to food tourism and food *in* tourism.

The final section considers, *Barriers and constraints*. Some of these have been picked up previously in other chapters. This is based on two case studies; one quantitative study in Canada and an ethnographic study from Sweden. The different approaches result in a triangulation of conclusions. The consumption of local food is considered good, but amongst other things, cost and management of the supply chain create challenges. This is something that resonates strongly with my personal experience.

In conclusion Hall and Gössling revisit the ideas covered in the text, focusing specifically on institutional and bureaucratic barriers, stakeholder knowledge and awareness, and economic values. There is much about food tourism that is attractive; to tourists, to the tourism, food and hospitality industry and to government, but the relationships are complicated and everything is not as simple as it would seem. For those directly involved in this 'sector' I think that this would reflect a common experience. This book represents a good exploration of some of those ideas and experiences. The editors make a final comment as to a lack of quantitative data. Possibly this represents a subconscious desire for a more certain world where cause and effect are clearly set out. Given that the results of much quantitative enquiry depends on who asks the questions and what questions are asked I am not sure how much further clarity this will bring, particularly given that (recent) experience has shown that decisions and action are not necessarily based on evidence.

## References

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