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A review of: *Waterways and the cultural landscape*, edited by Francesco Vallerani and Francesco Visentin, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2018, 266 pp., £105 (hardback), ISBN: 9781138226043

In regards to the recreational aspects of water bodies, until recently the focus of tourism geographers has mostly been on a large-scale, that is, oceans and seas. For example, taking holidays on cruise ships is fairly well researched, as well as 4S (sea-sand-sun-sex) tourism. In comparison, inland waterways, however, have received very little attention. The studies that have been published over the past three decades have most prominently taken the tourism management angle, often from a quantitative point of view. Therefore, a work such as this, featuring a comprehensive discussion of the inland waterways from the cultural perspective and with a strong focus on their use and potential for tourism, is long overdue.

The book is divided into two main parts, 'Cultural Visions' and 'Touristic Perspectives' respectively, and with contributing authors providing an exemplary and wide-ranging array of mainly European waterways (with the one exception of Canada). The case studies focus on the UK, Finland, Russia, France, Italy, Croatia, Poland and Spain, discussing rivers, canals and canalised rivers, the waterways that are well used and maintained, as well as the minor, 'forgotten water flows' (Vallerani, p. 10). The authors' backgrounds are mainly situated in cultural geography but also tourism studies, thus directing the focus of the book towards the closer examination of various water landscapes and their use for recreational activities. The main focus of the analysis in the volume lies on the intersections of cultural (but also natural) heritage, history, landscape, urban and rural (re)development, sustainable and heritage tourism, as well as consideration of the representations, aesthetics and visual consumption of the European waterways.

The book starts with an introduction by one of the editors, Vallerani, setting the scene in his eloquent and beautifully crafted argument for the fluvial sensibilities towards the socio-natural world, as well as for the 'fluvial sense of place' (p. 9). He envisages many important avenues for the research of waterways, stressing the need to study the canals as unique socio-cultural entities of industrial and natural heritage. Vallerani also focuses on the seductive nature of waterscapes, which link to the (cultural) tourism aspect discussed in the volume, but also its major focus on the various representations of the waterways. The current state, status and use of the waterways is inextricably linked with their history, which plays an important part in all of their dynamics. All the chapters deal with this historical background to some extent, but in several of them, the historical aspect is central to the argument and is exemplarily researched. Mukerji's (Ch. 5) analysis of 'vernacular water engineering' unearths the forgotten social histories of France's Canal du Midi by discussing the role of women in the construction of this extremely important waterway.

Similarly, Nyka's (Ch. 11) analysis of the manifold strategies of the long-term project of 'reclaiming the land from the water' (p. 173) in the Vistula River delta in Poland, is an in-depth and thoroughly researched analysis of the long traditions of the strategies and practices of living alongside water and the consequences of disrupting such practices. Furthermore, all of the chapters deal with the cultural heritage of waterways and the ways the heritage is used (or could be used) in regards to urban and rural development more generally, and for tourism specifically. The waterways are mostly seen as providing

‘communities with opportunities to reconnect with their past by providing an avenue to rekindle interest in local history’ (Prideaux, p. 143) where the heritagisation of these ‘liquid landscapes’ (Peterle & Visentin, p. 122) provides opportunities for sustainable and heritage tourism.

The management and development of the waterways is discussed in several chapters, with two of them (Ch. 9 and 12) following Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, discussing the canals in terms of their construction, operation, decline and transformation. The latter is currently happening, with the waterways often playing a central role in urban and rural regeneration and development. Formerly industrial waterfronts are being transformed into residential and commercial redevelopments, and linked directly with urban regeneration and gentrification – but as Airas (Ch. 2) demonstrates via the use of an iconographical framework of analysis, these developments, marketed with their ‘distinctiveness’ (p. 30) as a highly desirable feature, actually result in spreading an increasing homogeneity across the globe. The ways in which these changes influence local communities, but also the visitor experience, as well as the implications for individual wellbeing, should definitely be the subject of future studies.

This brings us to another important topic, which the majority of the chapters of the book engage, namely the various ways the ‘landscape[s] of water – otherwise called the hydro-landscape[s]’ (Vallerani, p. 3) are represented in varying mediums. Daniels (Ch. 1) examines the historical and contemporary representations of the River Trent (UK) and asks how we might change and better understand waterscapes through artworks in order to communicate the dynamics of liquid and hybrid borderlands of water and land ‘to a wider public and engage them in the conversational process of imagining environmental change’ (p. 27). Similarly, Coates (Ch. 3) discusses media and artistic representations of the River Tyne (UK) by bringing interaction with non-human animals, specifically that of salmon, to the foreground. He demonstrates how the sense of place around the river has been influenced by the works of artists and writers who, sometimes working with environmental managers, are able ‘to instill (or restore) a biocultural sense of place among local people, based wholly upon the salmon’s presence (remembered and revived)’ (p. 45). In another take on watery representations, Peterle and Visentin discuss the narrative of Italian author Celati that played an important part in the transformation of the Po Delta waterscape ‘from landscape to heritage’ (p. 123). They explore the ways of discussing the waterway as ‘liquid chronotope’ (p. 125) that links fictional and tangible waterscapes. Further, Kochetkova (Ch. 5) studies the Soviet media representations and images that turned the Saimaa Canal that connects Russia and Finland, into a symbol of good neighbourliness.

The final thematic chapter by Eulisse and Visentin (Ch. 15) deals with the topic of new technologies, and concentrates on information and communication technologies through analysing a Venice project of digitalising heritage and the creation of a mobile application for trails of various sustainable mobility (walking, boating, kayaking, cycling, walking, horse-riding). Various representations of local waterways (from books, local newspapers, etc.) have been turned into a new representation in the form of a mobile application. Its purpose is to ‘re-imagine and re-create a sense of place for local waterscapes [—] and thereby spread an awareness of a new water culture promoting minor (and often neglected) waterways’ heritage’ (pp. 237–238). It would therefore direct and influence mobilities of

various groups of people not already engaged with the waterscapes, thereby creating new layers of interaction with the waterways.

With the focus on the discussed themes above, and with most of the analysis leaning heavily towards the representational aspects of waterways, there are several empirical and theoretical avenues of research indicated in the introduction by the editor, but not really tackled in the book itself, and therefore left for future scholars to research. In the various discussions on the importance of the waterways, the individual experience of their users could be brought to the foreground even more, be it either from the perspective of locals or the tourists or, rather, temporary locals in the glocal mobile world. There is also a need to study the embodied and sensory, as well as affective, experiences of waterways, the 'innovative connections between body movement and the formation of a well-grounded fluvial consciousness' (Vallerani, p. 5) – for these topics, the various sensory and mobile methods should be explored.

Vallerani also stresses that 'the hydro landscape is not the mere result of human activity; it is both a material thing and a conceptual framing of the world' (p. 3). Indeed, several chapters of the book engage with water as a substance, but more direct engagement with its materiality, in the framework of current materialities theories, is an important avenue for future treatments of the topic. There are several large-scale materialities, such as infrastructures, which are also expressions of power, and the political issues in relation to the waterways that require further investigation. Finally, returning to water and its qualities, its tendency to move and move various materialities – there are various forms of mobility in regards to water that require greater scrutiny, be it mundane mobilities or the politics of mobilities.

The book concludes with Visentin's timely call for a 'watery turn' (p. 251) in humanities and social sciences, and for putting water in the centre of analysis in order to renew thinking about it in terms of adaptability and resilience. I could not agree with this more – the importance and implications of water in its various states and formations in the contemporary world cannot be overstated. This book tackles several and highlights many avenues for potential research. 'It is now a question of not only moving our interest in waterways from commercial to tourism purposes but also, from an anthropocentric point of view where rivers [and canals] are something to be controlled and exploited, of adopting a new cultural approach that takes into account climate change, water scarcity, non-human aspects that consider the links between ecosystems and human wellbeing, and, in particular, the cultural services provided by the ecosystem' (Visentin, p. 251).

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