

## Book Review

**Tourism Crises, Management Responses and Theoretical Insight. Binghamton, Eric Laws and Prideaux Bruce. 2006. The Haworth Hospitality Press, pp. 160. ISBN 13-978-07890.**

Reviewed by Maximiliano E. Korstanje

*Global University of Lifelong Learning, USA*

Efforts to prevent risks generate new situations that lead humans towards other risks. Based on this premise, the Laws and Prideaux book calls attention to the importance of planning in the process of risk mitigation. The main thesis of this project seems to be that hypothesized settings should be created in order for scientists to operationalize those variables that generate risks. Risks are results of human actions but under some circumstances, they escape from human control generating serious losses for tourist destinations.

In the first chapter, Laws and Prideaux problematise the need for analysts to rank risks. The second chapter authored by Peters and Pikkemaat examines the roots of crisis in Alpine sports resorts. Complementary to that, Eugenio-Martin, Sinclair and Yeoman provide us with a case study based in Scotland where they describe a model to quantify the crisis effects. Fourth, Leslie and Black write on the role of epidemics in the UK and the diverse reactions of the tourism industry. The successive chapters study the impacts of foot and mouth disease (Irvine and Anderson) and the effects of 9/11 on travel patterns in Canada (Smith and Carmichael).

Last but not least, although the crisis management plan and its influence in a future scenario of tourism is commonplace in all remaining chapters of this book, it is exemplarily described in the papers by Cooper, Ross, and Scott and Laws, where the importance of educating future workforces (with a focus on the developing world) is emphasized.

It is unfortunate that the tourism industry is very sensible to the surfacing of risks and disasters. From SARS to terrorism, the efforts to maintain a competitive destination image may be destroyed in seconds because of risks. One of the aspects that connect risk with tourism is mobility that characterizes the industrialized nations. A virus outbreak surfacing in Japan can spread to Canada in hours, augmenting the vulnerability of globally linked communities. In this vein, Laws and Prideaux acknowledge that risks should be defined as social constructs which often mediate between

the self and real dangers. To give a clear example, the global audience may experience panic because of the outbreak of a new virus. However, less or no attention is drawn against the advance of Malaria in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and the United States (and other tropical or Caribbean destinations). The World Health Organization found that the mosquito that facilitates the malaria transmission has migrated from tropical zones to other climates. This represents a serious danger for developing and developed countries but there is almost no media coverage about it. On the other hand, some risks create a media hype. Law and Prideaux add that although mass media play an important role in communicating risks, sometimes they create a state of alarmism that has no scientific basis. Therefore, policy-makers, planners, officials and scientists should coordinate efforts not only to forecast next dangers, but also to identify risks based on the predictability for their destructive capacity. Such a coherent framework facilitates a timely identification of risk in order for society to take the necessary course of action. That way, some of the states of crisis experienced today could be avoided. After a further review, the diverse chapters that encompass this valuable book can be summed up as follows:

- 1) It is important that policy makers are trained and educated to identify probable crises.
- 2) Simulating scenarios is a form to predict future crises
- 3) Scientists should educate officials and planners who are often called to deal with crises.
- 4) A plan should give some sense about the steps followed by those stakeholders affected by these types of unexpected events.
- 5) Those events that can alter suddenly the life of society in a significant manner must be considered a state of crisis.

Those readers who wish to delve into this will find a suitable and well-written book whose chapters although can be read separately, are linked in the thread of a similar argument, namely the urgencies of nation-states to protect tourism and its growth from external and internal risks. Undoubtedly, this book makes a clear effort not only to expand the

current understanding of risk perceptions but also in setting forward a model to quantify the disruptive potential of events. In addition, one may add that this book focuses on the significance of crisis and the importance of prevention, and for that deserves considerable credit. The sensibility of tourism to potential external or internal hazards must be addressed with a coherent and correct evaluation that allows the implementation of a security plan. Terrorism for example, on American soil, generated many problems for tourism and hospitality industries affecting seriously the economies of some sites. The vulnerability of Americans has never been seriously considered until 9-11. This reminds us how important scenario planning really is.

According to these arguments, crises and disasters should be first classified. Disasters can be defined as “unexpected occurrence with chaotic aftermaths” for communities. The main thesis of this work is that research based on pre-crisis stages prevents the occurrence of the next crisis. However, from our end, we strongly believe Laws and Prideaux ignore the inter-connection between risks, resiliency and disasters. Put the problem in this way, tourism should not be considered a resilient activity, but a form of resilience the society employs in moments of uncertainty. At a first glance, let’s remind readers that resilience can be understood as “the capacity of society to overcome states of disasters, chaos and uncontrolled situations”. One of the aspects that characterized disasters as Katrina in New Orleans or the Tsunami in Sri Lanka was the process of these communities.

The awareness generated by these in new projects benefiting from the aftermath. Many tourists desire to experience sites related to disasters enabled the investment role of tourism in the recovery battlefields or disasters or ground-zero in New York city (Dark-tourism). This suggests that the tourism industry seems not to be as vulnerable as Laws and Prideaux preclude, can be seen as a key factor (a form of resiliency) to accelerate community recovery. A tourist destination can be seriously affected by a disaster or crisis but after the passing of a certain amount of time its attraction rises because of it. Therefore, disasters, to some extent, recalculate and re-cycle the value of lands by means of real-estate and tourism.

Secondly, the social scientists have exerted considerable criticism against the zero-risk theory (which is implicitly defended by this book) because it not only is a utopia (some risk always exists and cannot be eliminated) but also trivializes the role of financial markets in creating and absorbing the risks. The risk is a mechanism created by the modern society to maintain the financial existent order. Insurances of all kinds offer to consumers the ability to mitigate the risk at the exchange of a sum of money. Following this logic, the danger takes a fictional nature resting on the imaginary of consumers. What is important to mention here is that risks feed the capacity of consumption of any society. Importantly, the paradox Laws and Prideaux’s book is unable to resolve is why the frantic quest for mitigating risk only engenders more risks.