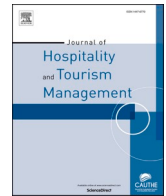




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Book Review

A review on the “Peer-to-peer accommodation and community resilience: implications for sustainable development” book.

The sharing economy is a business model where transaction activities occur on online platforms, which is an emerging phenomenon in the recent decades thanks to the Internet evolution, technology platform development, and changes in consumer behavior. The exponential growth of this economic model has been witnessed more significantly within the hospitality and tourism industry, where tourists can easily access accommodation services provided by local people. Airbnb is a dominant example of an accommodation sharing platform with its philosophy initiated by connecting individuals who have underutilized assets with those who need accommodation temporarily. The platform has been self-proclaimed as a sustainable alternative to conventional accommodations in terms of contributing positively to the economy, society, and environment in the host community. However, the positive impacts of peer-to-peer rentals on communities have been challenged by the adverse findings in academic research or negative news on social media. Thus, a holistic investigation of the true intersection between the accommodation sharing platform and community resilience is definitely valuable to guide the sustainable development of this economic activity.

Here, the book “Peer-to-peer Accommodation and Community Resilience: Implications for Sustainable Development” addresses the unstudied aspects of the complex interlinkages of the growth of peer-to-peer accommodation, sustainability, and community resilience through the lens of diverse stakeholders. This book is composed of 11 chapters, with each of them containing an intensive literature review and rigorous research methodology to approach research gaps. Moreover, these chapters are written in an easy-to-read way to enable the reader to more easily find useful information.

The first chapter, entitled “Mobile Gentrifiers and Leavers: Tourist Dwelling as an Agent of Exclusion in Barcelona,” provides a thorough investigation of how current and former residents of Vila de Gràcia in Barcelona perceive tourism-related activities, and in particular how short-term pattern dwelling has been transforming the neighbourhood. The findings of this mixed-method research are not only in line with previous studies which confirm the effect of growth of short-term rentals on housing affordability, but also its novelty lies on how the intense “airbnbization” contributes to the loss of true neighbour identity, poses security issues, and causes less accessibility to local services, all of which are the key factors pushing residents out of their neighbourhood.

Local residents are undoubtedly a critical stakeholder whose perceptions and benefits can not be ignored in the sustainable development of accommodation sharing platforms. However, their perceptions towards the impact of this phenomenon has not received enough attention from scholars and practitioners. Thus, the second chapter “Social Exchange and Peer-to-peer Accommodation: Residents’ Perceptions in a Neighbourhood Context” attempts to approach this research gap by

examining how local residents of Koukaki (Athens, Greece) perceive the impacts of the growth of Airbnb use on their communities through the lens of social exchange theory. Due to the lack of an effectively regulated structure of the platform’s development, residents consider themselves having either low power or no power in the exchanged relationship with Airbnb guests. This involuntary and unbalanced exchange explains the dominance of local residents’ negative perceptions towards the social, economic, and environmental impacts of Airbnb, which lead them to adopt different behaviours to either reduce the adverse effect of short-term rentals on their local community or adjust themselves to the new situation. Additionally, this chapter also highlights the importance of the sharing platform and property owners in mediating a more balanced social exchange between local residents and Airbnb guests.

The third chapter “Airbnb Host Responsibilities and Community Resilience: The Case of Japan” provides refreshing views about Airbnb development in the context of an Asian country – Japan, and how economic activities can be a sustainable alternative to the shortage of accommodation in the mega-events such as the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This chapter deals with the perceived responsibilities of Airbnb hosts in improving the resilience of the local community. Through a semi-interview with 16 Japanese Airbnb hosts, this chapter reveals that the current legal framework of private lodging operations is more favorable to professional hosts which might destroy the promised benefits of meaningful host-guest relations and change the nature and philosophy of Airbnb, and thus, subsequently minimize local community resilience. Without the sufficient support from legal frameworks and the platform, the sharing tactics from host community’s self-organization are vital to enhance the positive impacts of short-term rentals platforms on the resilience of the community. These tactics can be promoting useful practices amongst individual, non-professional hosts such as sharing guests experiences, or encouraging a so-called “purist”, non-professional hospitality style in order to restore their reputation and achieve their non-financial motives such as international cultural exchanges and social experience. Moreover, in the long run, the role of the platform can not be overlooked to achieve community resilience.

The fourth chapter “Peer-to-peer Accommodation and Resilient hosts in Split: The Case of Radunica street” drives us into a review of how offline peer-to-peer accommodation trading was considered as a valuable tool in supporting community resilience in the post-crisis situation. Overcoming individual financial problems was the primary motive of local engagement in short-term rentals trading. This new economic phenomenon has initially challenged the residents’ emotions and also led to deep-set structural changes in socio-cultural aspects of the local community. Therefore, community resilience can only be achieved through subsequent progress which starts from accepting the new circumstances, adopting an affirmative outlook, and later participating in the culture of cooperation or cooperation networks. The resilient individuals are attributed as those who are able to build their own

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cooperation networks and succeed by their own criteria. Interestingly, this chapter broadens the common understanding of the “peer-to-peer” term as a host-guest relationship in the online sharing platform to a triangular cooperation amongst “gatherer-host-tourist” among offline peer-to-peer rentals.

The fifth chapter “Perceived Impacts of Short-term Rentals in the Local Community in the UK”. This chapter aims to investigate the perceived impact of short-term rentals on community resilience through a quantitative empirical approach with UK-based Airbnb users (hosts, guests), and non-users (who are aware of the short-term rental platforms). Its findings revealed the five key dimensions of the perceived impacts, including: environmental care, urban transformation, social capital and lifestyle, housing, infrastructure and events, and antisocial behaviour and crime. Overall, respondents consider the impacts of these economic activities slightly more positively than negatively, and more involved groups (Airbnb users) have more positive perceptions compared to their counterparts. Surprisingly, contrasting with extant studies, environmental care is confirmed as a positive contribution of short-term rentals in the community which is aligned with the statements from accommodation sharing platforms, while antisocial behavior and crime is perceived as the worst effect of this activity. Thus, more attention from government and policymakers is required to maximize the positive impacts and reduce the negative sides of this short-term rental phenomenon in order to improve community resilience.

The sixth chapter “Airbnb Guests’ Pro-environmental Behaviour and Community Resilience: Mitigating the Negative Impacts of Airbnb” shifts the focus to the pro-environmental behavior of Airbnb guests and its importance in mitigating the unfavorable impacts of Airbnb and improving host communities’ resilience. This research is conducted quantitatively in the context of Norway, with findings that confirm the positive influence of Airbnb guests’ environmental knowledge and concern on their pro-environmental behaviors in the host community. Interestingly, Airbnb guests have the similar pro-environmental behaviors, either when they are at home or at an Airbnb accommodation. This finding contradicts a previous study of the hotel context, which might be explained by the “homely feel” of Airbnb rentals that encourage guests to act like residents. Thus, local authorities and Airbnb hosts should promote local policies about sustainable practices to foster Airbnb guests’ favorable behaviours. Nevertheless, the authors also alert the generalizability of these findings to different populations, as the sample of this study only included Norwegian students.

The seventh and eighth chapter move the focus to the impact of Airbnb development on non-urban areas with a consideration of spatial differences. The seventh chapter, “Reframing Rurality: the Impact of Airbnb on Second-home Communities in Wales and Sweden” focuses on the impact of short-term rentals on countryside second-home communities. The novelty of this study lies on the suggestion of a separate but connected layer of spatial interaction inherent in these rural areas which is mediated by the perceived rural space of the three user groups, including: primary residents, second homeowners, and Airbnb users. The different perceptions of rurality among these distinct groups has put the philosophy of Airbnb in offering “living like a local” experience to guests in doubt, especially when Airbnb guests’ perception is unavoidably moderated by the local community’s viewpoints. This chapter also confirms the sharing of similar views of rurality among Airbnb guests and more general rural tourists who both emphasize the importance of amenities and interpersonal interactions with the local community. Thus, a local community resilience strategy should seriously take into account the rural perceptions of both permanent and temporary residents.

The eighth chapter, “Local Commitment and Withdrawal in the Wake of Conspicuous Airbnb Place Dynamics on a Cold-water Island” involves the issues of sense of places and community resilience in discovering the distinct effects of Airbnb development on different locations of the small fishing island community of Heimaey, Iceland. This

mixed-method study shows that the growth of Airbnb can either enhance or disturb community resilience depending on the surrounding context. In particular, the concentration of professional Airbnb hosts in the downtown area has led to the increase in the number of strangers and loss of the place identity, which fuels residents’ intention to withdraw from the community. However, this economic activity can boost local commitment to both place and community in the area with isolated, casual, and semi-professional hosts. Future short-term rentals related studies and policymakers should consider the role of sense of places in achieving the goals of community resilience.

The ninth chapter, “Peer-to-peer Accommodation as a Peacebuilding Tool: Community Resilience and Group Membership” drives us to the understanding of social bonds within the Couchsurfing community – a network of free hospitality exchange and its ability in developing more resilient and sustainable communities. Focusing on the case study of Cyprus where a prolonged ethnic conflict has existed, this study shows that Cyprus-based Couchsurfing hosts achieve the strong and non-temporary social bonds within the networks, and consider themselves as part of a group membership, although they have earlier belonged to different sides of the island’s divide. Therefore, the P2P accommodation can contribute significantly to the divided communities through increasing community resilience across its members and supporting the process of social re-categorization into wider and more inclusive groups. However, the conditions in which the contribution of accommodation sharing platforms can be more effective for peacebuilding and conflict transformation is unclear, which should be further examined in future research.

The tenth chapter “Not My Stairway: How Do Neighbours Cope with Peer-to-peer Rentals in Housing Cooperatives?” offers an interesting picture about the Danish housing cooperative movements and the Nordic practices of cohabitation as the key catalysts in minimizing the adverse impacts of short-term rentals platforms on Nordic capital cities. Through the empirical illustration of how the Danish housing cooperative handled short-term rentals and balcony disputes, the study finds that the Nordic culture of citizen engagement fostering their residents’ response and collective actions against the unfavorable activities towards the resilience of local community. Consequently, the housing cooperative model can be appreciated as a breeding ground of community resilience, and furthermore, the neighbourhood conflict is not always a challenge, but sometimes, can be a catalyst of societal cohesion.

The eleventh chapter, “Understanding the Airbnb Community and its Community Impact: the Use of Scenarios to Build Resilience” offers a holistic understanding of how the exponential growth of Airbnb impacts local community resilience, through looking back at two Airbnb development scenario studies in 2015 and 2018. The widely pronounced concept of tourists “living like a local”, “sharing”, and “community” from the platform has misled local authorities and local residences engaging in undoubtedly favorable manners towards the perceived sustainable movement. Nonetheless, Airbnb guests are not really blended into resident communities, and the term “Airbnb community” does not include the local resident. Thus, it requires the transparency of the platform to facilitate policy makers or government to launch an effective regulatory framework to ensure the sustainable growth of “home-sharing”. This chapter also confirms the significant role of scenario planning in providing deep insights into unforeseen events, which supports communities building resilience by foreseeing and managing disruptions.

The book “Peer-to-peer Accommodation and Community Resilience: Implications for Sustainable Development” successfully unravels the complexity of the relationship between peer-to-peer accommodation and community resilience through providing an extensive and rigorous understanding of diverse stakeholders’ perceptions and behaviours towards the impacts of short-term rental development in a host community. The merits of this edited book relate to both the application of various appropriate research methods, and the interesting, novel, and

multidimensional findings about the distinct impacts of peer-to-peer accommodations on communities, which mostly derived from the dissimilar perceptions of different stakeholders in a diverse array of destination communities.

Thus, this book is strongly recommended to students, researchers, local authorities, and policymakers who are interested in having a holistic understanding of the interlinkage among this economic phenomenon and community resilience, to promote the sustainable development of the sharing platforms. However, this book also has certain limitations. Firstly, most chapters are conducted in Western countries, which might challenge the generalizability of the results to different populations. Thus, more research should be carried out in developing countries where profligate tourism is currently a serious

concern. Moreover, this book mainly focuses on the perceptions and viewpoints of peer-to-peer rental platforms' users (hosts and guests) and residents, which overlook the perceptions of the platform management and local authorities/public government. The latter are also key stakeholders whose roles are critically important to launch effective policies or guidelines to guide this short-term rental activity to develop in a more sustainable way.

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