



Book Review

2050 – Tomorrow's Tourism, I. Yeoman, T.L.Y. Rebecca, M. Mars, M. Wouters. Channel View Publications, Bristol, Tonawanda, Ontario (2012). 258 pp., HBK ISBN: 978-1-84541-302-6, PBK ISBN: 978-1-84541-301-9

This book is the most recent publication from futurologist Ian Yeoman, writing in association with three other authors based largely in the Asia Pacific region. The text acts as something of a sequel to Yeoman's earlier text *Tomorrow's Tourist* (2008), which identified key drivers of change and made predictions for tourists and their behaviour in 2030. On the basis that change was occurring faster than he had anticipated Yeoman takes the longer view in this publication and focuses the crystal ball on a point much further into the future – 2050. This 'long view' is the central premise of the book, but also one which many readers may struggle with – depending on the stage of one's career, we may be elderly if we are here at all by the time the intervening years take us to this end point. Nevertheless, this publication is easy to read and encourages the reader to think more broadly on the subject of the future. Using a style that borrows heavily from science fiction, it frees up the mind to ponder on possible futures rather than obsessing over verifiable and quantifiable forecasts. Put rather well by the authors themselves:

The purpose of this book is to illustrate the future but not provide an exact future. The chapters in this book do make you think, you might not agree with them, but you will find them illuminating and thought provoking, sometimes scary and humorous, other times 'oh really' or 'I never realised that'. (Yeoman et al. 2012, p.4)

The book commences with an initial chapter which lays out the framework for the reader, highlighting three key areas of focus identified as the central themes which will be the driving force of change in the future; namely the forces of wealth, resources and technology. On first reading, I was of the opinion that these had overlooked some of the key drivers, such as demographic changes, however the framework is sufficiently broad to allow specifics to fit within these headings. The structure of the book then follows on from these three themes illustrated, in the main, with geographically specific case studies.

Before getting into the detail of the case studies the authors present a very brief (1 page) overview of scenarios planning. Given that so much of what is to follow is based on scenarios planning, I personally would have preferred to read a more detailed explanation of how the scenarios had been developed, though presumably these details may be found in other publications for those who are interested. Indeed, Prideaux (2009) for example provides a useful chapter on the development and application of scenarios for planning purposes. That said, a little more guidance on the precise methods used to develop the cases presented in the book would have been appreciated.

Regarding the case studies in particular, I struggled at times to find the utility of these. For me, the most useful elements were the precursors that commenced each of the case studies. These were summarised helpfully into boxed 'learning points' for each chapter/case study and each case study was introduced by positioning facts which informed the rather more imaginative suggested futures which followed. The scenarios were also discussed in terms of key drivers of change, which were a useful summary. Taking for example Chapter 12, 2050: The Future of Transport, this was an interesting chapter which highlighted some of the key drivers which as climate change and peak oil. Revisiting these facts provides a useful reference and forms a natural starting point from which to explore the implications of these issues for the future.

In terms of the potential audiences for this book, this publication will no doubt have a broad appeal and is a refreshing change from much of the standardised academic texts that we are more familiar with. It will be of interest to anyone who is interested in 'what will happen next' and perhaps in attempting to answer some of the questions posed and the issues raised. In my own work experience I have used the book as a teaching resource for Masters level students, and have also used drawn on some of the material for a workshop with a range of tourism stakeholders including public sector officials at national, regional and local level, as well as representatives from the private sector. Both groups received the information with interest and have explored practical ways in which to apply scenarios planning to their own work.

Although written in a light-hearted style that is more akin to the genre of science fiction than the science facts that we are accustomed to in academic writing, the jovial tone cannot disguise some very disturbing and uncomfortable facts which will inevitably have influence over our lives in the future and which will and should influence decision making. These uncomfortable facts include the arrival of peak oil and accompanying terminal decline of oil production; climate change; a growing world population coupled with an increasingly ageing population; food security and water scarcity. These raise many questions which can only be answered as time unfolds. However, to my mind one of the most pressing question relates to the projected number of travellers anticipated in 2050 which is articulated only as an afterthought in the concluding page of the book

"... how will we cope with the impact of 9 billion wanting to travel; what would be the demand on our environmental resources, could our infrastructures cope and how would the citizenry of the most popular destinations cope with such an influx." (Yeoman, 2012, p.230)

Given the challenging nature of many of the issues identified in this publication, if there is any purpose in reading this book, it should not be as passive bystanders, waiting for the future to

happen to us, but as proactive participants and stakeholders who can help develop and shape the future. If we like what we read in these pages, then it is up to us to steer the future to this end point, if we don't, then action is still required, we must steer towards an alternative, preferred future. Either way, inaction is not an option.

As J.F. Kennedy is attributed to saying:

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

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