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Second Homes and Leisure: New Perspectives on a Forgotten Relationship

Trudie Walters and Tara Duncan (eds)

Routledge, 2016, £95.00 (hbk), 117 + x pp.

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The leisure perspective focuses the book on a particular use of second homes and so Paris' critical commentary in chapter 2 provides an important overview of the breadth of uses of second homes and the related problems of definition. 'Second homes' is a catchall term that covers a wide range of housing types and users and where the impact on the permanent 'host' community will vary accordingly. Impacts will differ where second homeowners are purchasing housing in low demand areas rather than in 'mature' markets where there is direct competition with local residents. Social and cultural impacts will vary greatly too depending on, among other things, the density of second homes in any given settlement, the frequency with which they are occupied and the cultural differences between the 'host' community and second home owners. Finally, the economic 'contribution' will differ, for example, according to whether the home is used only for private leisure purposes or is let out as a holiday home. Paris therefore draws our attention to the importance of looking at the motivations of second homeowners and so to the use of the property rather than its category as a second home.

In the introduction Walters and Duncan explain the reasons for focusing on the leisure use of second homes. The collection of papers comprising the book emerge from a call for papers which sought to respond to the 'forgotten' or underdeveloped links between second homes and leisure studies. Originally appearing as articles in a special issue of *The Annals of Leisure Research* they are now made available as a book. The collection reinforces the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to the leisure use of second homes because, "[t]he impacts of second homes on communities and places in many countries almost inevitably combine elements *both* of leisure and tourism *and* local or regional housing markets" (Paris, p7 emphasis in original). It does this effectively rather than claiming that there is a discrete contribution that leisure studies might make.

The contributors of the empirical chapters come from a range of backgrounds including; planning, cultural geography, tourism and leisure. Many reference Coppock's classic edited work on second homes (Coppock 1977) that similarly brought a range of disciplinary perspectives to bear. This book also benefits from a range of methods that inform the different chapters: McNicol and Glorioso's use of longitudinal study of Canmore (a winter resort near Banff, Canada; chapter 3); Sato's use of archival material to trace the shift from colonial to indigenous ownership of villas in the Hill Station of Karuizawa, Japan (chapter 4), and; Walters' use of qualitative thematic analysis to look at how second homes in New Zealand have been depicted as a luxury good (chapter 7). These serve as useful models illustrating a wide methodological scope for future research.

The six empirical chapters provide an international range of insights. Each is presented as a standalone piece of research rather than being part of a comparative study. This is a reasonable approach given the diverse and context dependent nature of second homes. Some are tightly focused on leisure uses, for example Walters' study of the consumption of second homes for leisure purposes in New Zealand. This chapter provides the clearest example of the second home as an alternative (or extra) space for consumption, through an analysis of how leisure orientated lifestyle are represented in the magazine *Home New Zealand*. McLeod & Busser's work on the significance of 'Visiting Friends & Relatives' to the tourism market in Costa Rica has a strong leisure/tourism focus too and directs the reader to one of the reoccurring themes of the collection, the economic costs and benefits of second homes to the local economy. As Barnett notes in her piece looking at leisure second homes in Devon, England (chapter 2), the economic contribution and cost of second homeowners to the local economy is rarely the subject of any rigorous assessment. Another noteworthy theme is the impact of increased international mobility, whether in stimulating purchases of second homes in Canada and Costa Rica or the impact of post-migrant generations maintaining a 'home' base in Morocco (Wagner, chapter 5).

The collection is focused almost exclusively on second and holiday homes in rural and small town locations and the inclusion of a city perspective (in addition to Wagner's chapter on Al Hoceima, Morocco), could have provided a useful extra dimension. Two examples are; first, where multiple properties have been purchased

for holiday lettings and advertised through platforms such as 'Airbnb', which impacts city tourism and housing markets. Elements of the 'Airbnb' business model are presaged by McLeod & Busser's description of the positive contribution that 'Visiting Friends & Relatives' makes to the local tourist economy as hosts offer a significant personal connection that draw guests to a location. This resonates with the claims, if not always the reality, of 'Airbnb'. A second example is the rise of the 'buy to leave' market in some cities. Although primarily investment vehicles, these might also be viewed through the lens of leisure where the property is occasionally used by an overseas owner. These examples and the increase in international mobility referenced in the collection suggest that the impacts of second homes and leisure are likely to become more significant.

In his overview chapter, Paris notes that his background in housing studies made him 'nervous' of providing a critical commentary on second homes from a leisure perspective. However, it is evident that the use of second homes for leisure raises many questions of interest across disciplines including the complex ways use is made of, and meaning is given to, housing. The book provides thought provoking material that invites further research on second homes, but which will also be of relevance to students and academics whose interests extend beyond its core themes.

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Reference

Coppock, T. (ed) 1977. *Second Homes: Curse or Blessing?* Oxford: Pergamon.