

## Reviews

### **Balancing conservation and development in the Asia-Pacific region: A focus on islands**

Godfrey Baldacchino and Daniel Niles (eds.) (2011) *Island Futures: Conservation and Development across the Asia-Pacific Region*. Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, xvii, 183 pp., 18 illus., €99.95, hbk, ISBN: 978-4-431-53988-9.

This is the first volume in the Global Environmental Studies Book series under the aegis of the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), Kyoto, Japan. RIHN examines environmental studies in a broad sense. A focus on islands in the Asia-Pacific region highlights both the specific nature of these ecosystems and commonalities with larger continental settings. In collaboration with the Japan National Commission for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), contributors to 13 chapters discuss the concept of 'futurability' in the context of islands.

Vulnerability to disruption has often been cited in characterising island environments and human communities. In the era of globalisation and rapid climate change, vulnerability has increased accordingly. In striking a balance between ecological integrity, economic development and quality of life, islands must contend with relatively narrow resource bases and dependency to the outside world.

In moving 'beyond sustainability', Niles and Baldacchino identify the need to transform the 'quality of human-environment interactions' (p. 3) through an ideational shift labelled 'futurability', a translation of a Japanese word combining the ideographs for 'future' and 'potential'. In a subsequent chapter, Iwatsuki elaborates on the application of harmonious coexistence between nature and people in Japan at least before the Meiji Restoration more than a century ago. This is reflected in the establishment of zoning of a core area, buffer zone and transitional and residential area, similar to modern conservation areas.

Cultural heritage in the Pacific Islands with a focus on Vanuatu is addressed by Serrano and Stefanova in light of the growing recognition of

heritage management in promoting economic, environmental and social sustainability. Compared with other regions of the world, Pacific Island countries and territories remain under-represented on UNESCO's World Heritage List, which is largely attributed to the absence of comprehensive site inventories and lack of legislation to protect them. In relation to Chief Roi Mata's Domain, an officially recognised UNESCO cultural site, the authors describe the pressure of real estate agencies to attract foreign investment in the Buffer Zone surrounding the site, with few benefits accruing to local communities. International law is seen as essential for the conservation of protected areas, bearing in mind that engagement with local communities is equally important, as well as safeguarding the region's intangible heritage.

In looking at the development strategies for Smaller Island States and Territories, Baldacchino calls for a need to provide communities with 'economically viable and sustainable options' (p. 68) to ensure the preservation of 'natural capital'. However, these require external financial inputs and often depend on the transfer of rentier income. The link between resource management and economic development is further highlighted by a case study of the Galápagos Islands, with an emphasis on creating a new model of tourism development to reduce the impact of visitors on ecological resources and promote a more equitable distribution of financial benefits derived from ecotourism practices.

The marine environment is described within the context of the Komodo National Park (KNP) in Indonesia by Sitorus. KNP is 35% terrestrial and 65% marine, and is part of the Coral Triangle, yielding the world's richest coral diversity but also several threatened habitats and endangered species. The Park's Incentives and Sustainable Livelihoods programme has been successful in curbing destructive fishing practices and encouraging people in 'gaining biodiversity-sensitive livelihoods' (p. 103), for example, through the development of sustainable micro-enterprises. Ecotourism is regarded as

holding great potential for local socioeconomic development via income generation for the park's management and sustainable livelihood alternatives. However, tourism can be an unstable source of revenue, and even when it enjoys a boom, the needs of local communities should not be restricted by policies promoting exclusive use of protected areas. Another chapter by Akimichi examines the changing coastal commons in the Yaeyama Islands, Japan. He describes the decline of tidal stone weir fishing possibly linked to expanding fishing activities, outmigration to urban centres, the development of net fishing, changes to more modern fishing practices and the decline of communal labour for maintaining weir walls.

A survey of environmental attitudes (consumerism and environmentalism) and behaviours was carried out among Jeju Islanders, South Korea by Jeong. The latter were considered a more significant indicator and determinant of sustainable development than the former. Results showed that older people more actively displayed environmentally friendly behaviour than young adults. The author concludes that this is related to the older adults' low monthly incomes.

Besides addressing the common theme of reconciling environmental, economic and social/cultural sustainability ('futurability') in diverse insular settings, it is interesting to note that several of the contributors examine both the benefits and potential pitfalls of ecotourism in particular to island communities. In light of this, one would have expected more substantial input from those directly involved in tourism and hospitality management.

The volume provides a good geographical coverage, although one or two chapters focusing on a Polynesian (other than Hawai'i) or Micronesian society would have made the research more comprehensive. A concluding chapter drawing on the common themes and possible future directions also would have been useful. Nevertheless, the book should appeal to those who wish to learn more about the challenges and opportunities of development and conservation in the region.

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### Behind the postcard

Miriam Kahn (2011) *Tahiti beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life*. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington, xv, 272 pp. \$70.00, hbk, ISBN: 978-0-295-99101-6; \$35, pbk, ISBN: 978-0-295-99102-3.

Human beings are placemakers. We move through and experience the world in ongoing cycles of perception, conception and lived practice that situate individuals and communities in culturally patterned relationships to lands, other living beings and dispositions of power. Kahn's striking and potent *Tahiti beyond the Postcard* explores the ceaseless process of placemaking in French Polynesia's storied Society Islands. Extending existing scholarly conversations, particularly Foucault's notion of heterotopic spaces and Lefebvre's model of placemaking, and the deep ocean of previous representations of post-contact Tahiti, Kahn takes the reader through a nuanced reconsideration of 'place' in an understanding of the region's past and present.

Kahn begins by offering readers an accessible and fresh account of the European entanglement in the production of 'Tahiti' as a certain kind of place in the post-Enlightenment geographical imaginary. Popularly characterised as a paradise since early moments of contact with European visitors, the Society Islands are in fact thoroughly worldly places, with all that implies. Extending familiar arguments about the sexualisation and feminisation of Ma'ohi bodies and the spaces through which they move, and the romantic naturalisation of the Tahitian landscape from Bougainville and Cook to the present, Kahn identifies the production, surprising solidity and endurance of many other forms of what she terms 'pseudo-knowledge' about the colonies in the French *métropole*. For instance, displays of 'French colonial infrastructure, power, and pride, such as a historic flag raising when land was possessed or the celebration of Bastille Day half a world away' (p. 53) are as significant in the production of Tahitian place as Melville's escapism or Gauguin's fauvism, however much in opposition to them.

As Kahn notes, contradictions abound in a long running battle over the image of Tahiti. The