Introduction

Inherently, tourism is a geographical phenomenon linking places through mobility. Hence, it has been a topic of geographical inquiry since the early days of modern geographical research during the twentieth century, with its core concern for the role of place, space and environment (Hall and Page 2009, 2014). However, the position of tourism research within geography is contested, and not least in the Anglo-American sphere the establishment of specialized tourism departments, often within business schools, has entailed a movement of tourism geographers away from geography departments (Hall and Page 2009; Hall 2013; Wilson and Anton Clavé 2013; Müller 2014). Still, although tourism geographies may be marginalized in many geography departments, tourism geographers remain influential. As McKercher (2008) notes, tourism geographers have formatively influenced tourism research and are among the most cited scholars in the field, and in 2018 Google Scholar ranked *Tourism Geographies* among the top ten journals in both the ‘Geography and Cartography’ and ‘Tourism and Hospitality’ categories. Moreover, today, sessions on tourism geographies constitute prominent programme elements of many geography conferences, and major reference works (Lew et al. 2004; Wilson 2012; Lew et al. 2014), textbooks (Hall and Page 2014; Williams and Lew 2014; Nelson 2017), and book series such as the Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility and Current Developments in the Geographies of Leisure and Tourism (Routledge) and Geographies of Tourism and Global Change (Springer) further underline the healthy position of tourism geographies.

However, as with all disciplines, tourism geographies are constantly changing, as many of the available reviews of the discipline indicate (Butler 2004; Gibson 2008, 2009; Hall and Page 2009; Nepal 2009; Gibson 2010; Smith 2010; Gill 2012). Besides changing topics, theoretical ideas and methodologies, it has also been argued that tourism geographies are moving towards a postdisciplinary state, open to influences from all other disciplines (Gill 2012). Coles et al. (2005, 2006) argue strongly for such an orientation, as it opens the way to research that is not confined by a single discipline’s traditions and norms, but rather allows for flexible modes of knowledge production and problem-centred research. Moreover, even today’s insight that global challenges are complex calls for research approaches
that combine knowledge from various disciplines rather than relying on a single one (Coles et al. 2016).

This book should be seen against this background. Research is always influenced by the changing institutional context, current topics and challenges for societies, and learning processes in themselves. This constantly requires a reorientation of every discipline in order to remain relevant to various target audiences, which also calls for new research agendas. The research agendas included in this volume present some of the changing ideas and future challenges identified by their authors. Directly or indirectly, however, they also discuss and document the state of tourism geographies.

Research agendas

The ambition of Edward Elgar Publishing with the Elgar Research Agendas is to provide opportunities to explore and develop a subject in provoking and stimulating ways and sketch pathways for future research. Of course, ideally every researcher has an individual research agenda, an idea in mind of what she or he would like to accomplish in the future. It should be noted, though, that funding and time restrictions imply that few agendas will be realized in detail, and some not at all. Others, however, will engage more researchers; they may adopt ideas from the agenda, or even join in the work to realize it. Research agendas can thus transform from individual to collective undertakings. Alternatively, they can be rejected by other researchers and generate competing trails, hopefully also leading to fruitful debate and progressing knowledge. Some research agendas are neglected, however, which does not automatically imply that they are inferior. In fact, they could simply be dead ends, or possibly ahead of their time.

The extent to which the research agendas presented in this book will see one or another of the scenarios mentioned above remains to be seen. However, it is important to note that research agendas contribute to forming the future as well as the past of a discipline. As Koselleck (1985) noted, each present has been a future that has passed. This implies that understanding today's ideas within an academic discipline always has to be seen in relation to the past. Thus, an essential question to ask is how a past and a future are related at a given present time, or how a present is influenced by the past (Koselleck 1985). Research agendas are therefore always also an expression of what had previously been expected from the future. However, Koselleck’s argument also implies that a research agenda will influence researchers in the future in how they reflect upon the past and, in their turn, sketch a desirable future. As Koselleck (1985) argues, the advent of modernity, implying more rapid changes in society, means that expectations for the future have grown, simply because future conditions are realized as influential for the remaining lifespan of the single individual.

As we know, this development is also reflected in scientific practices, entailing constant new ‘turns’ and fashions. Hence, research agendas may be seen as a form
of trendsetting, too, which is also exhibited in C. Michael Hall’s chapter (Chapter 3). But hopefully the research agendas in this book will last longer and focus on solving real-world problems rather than stimulating esoteric exercises. Moreover, presenting a collection of research agendas requires some editorial thought about whose agenda should be heard. Academic hegemonies and other power structures have been discussed in relation to tourism, and have sometimes suppressed or neglected voices from outside the Anglo-American realm, as well as those of women (Visser 2009; Tribe 2010; Wilson and Anton Clavé 2013; Pritchard and Morgan 2017).

This argument implies that designing a book like this should be done carefully, since its composition says something about the past, present and future of the discipline. From this point of view, an ambition has been to include new voices and emerging themes. Of course, research agendas should last and ideally be turned into research. This calls for a selection of authors who will hopefully be able to pursue their ideas and contribute to the production of knowledge. In the end, however, personal networks do play a role, as do the time budgets of busy scholars. Hence, not everyone who was invited was ultimately able to contribute to this volume. In the following section, the result of this work is briefly outlined.

Outline

The 16 chapters in this volume present 14 research agendas developed by researchers from Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Of course, the inclusion of researchers from all over the world – though the geographical distribution and the female–male ratio are certainly not perfect – is an attempt to reflect geographical variations when it comes to ideas and perspectives on future research needs. Furthermore, the presented agendas differ in relation to their ambitions. While some address tourism geographical inquiry as such, others develop ideas for more delimited areas of research.

In Chapter 2, following this introduction, Dieter K. Müller presents a review of the field of tourism geographies from a bibliometric perspective. In contrast to many other bibliometric studies, the focus is not on the performance of single individuals; rather, it is an attempt to illustrate the impact of institutional changes and developments in relation to the geography of knowledge production, but also regarding themes and topics presented in the tourism geographies literature.

In Chapter 3, C. Michael Hall addresses the issue of research agendas as such. Noting that research agendas are embedded in institutional environments, he argues that the search for a research agenda is reflective of academic structures and practices, which implies that there is an immanent risk that they are orientated towards satisfying the needs defined by precisely these structures and practices rather than being motivated by a desire to contribute to solving relevant problems.
In Chapter 4, Jarkko Saarinen asks whether tourism is a serious subject. Departing from the notion that tourism geographies tend to be marginalized within the discipline of geography, he argues that the current topics addressed in tourism geographies do not justify such a stereotypical assessment, particularly considering recent research trends in tourism geographies. However, Saarinen advocates an academic conversation with the geography community in order to embed tourism as an important field even for other geographers. Rita de Cássia Ariza da Cruz (Chapter 5) also addresses the relation of tourism geographies to the wider discipline of geography. From her perspective, a problem that needs to be overcome is found in the often rather descriptive approaches within the field. Hence, a greater awareness of the need for more firm theoretical considerations is forwarded as a solution to the problem, as is the need to create bridges to other fields of not only geography but also other disciplines, in order to make tourism geographies more relevant. In Chapter 6, Honggang Xu and Yuefang Wu review the development of tourism geographies in a Chinese context. They note that tourism geographies indeed had a positive development and are opening up new avenues within Chinese geography research. Still, there are remaining challenges, not least related to insufficient theoretical underpinnings. However, they also argue that, despite the actual contributions from tourism geographers to the discipline of geography, its status remains relatively weak.

Another way of approaching the relationship between tourism geographies and geographies is presented by Dieter K. Müller (Chapter 7), who argues that tourism geographies should be infused into other subdisciplines of geography. For this to happen, he argues, it is necessary to understand tourism geographies not as the object of research but rather as a perspective on societal processes. In such a context, the role of tourism geographies changes to one of assessing the role of tourism in various geographical processes and phenomena. Such new tourism geographies, Müller argues, allow for a wider array of research topics but also for a greater relevance of tourism geographies thinking.

The following chapters address more specific topics within tourism geographies. Patrick Brouder (Chapter 8) argues that studies of the tourism economy have largely avoided any criticism by claiming to be objective. Within tourism geographies, however, there is an active approach to critical studies of tourism in a place-based context, including critical studies of the tourism economy. By connecting these studies Brouder calls for a movement of tourism economic research towards a geographical political economy of tourism. Keith Debbage (Chapter 9) discusses the economic geographies of tourism, and offers new perspectives on entrepreneurship within the field. In his chapter, he notes that tourism geographers have contributed to a broadening of the entrepreneurship literature, not least by highlighting the role of spatial context in firm behaviour. But Debbage complains about the asymmetry in relation to the wider geography field, arguing that the focus of tourism geographers on 'low-tech' consumer services is in contrast to mainstream economic geographies' interest in 'high-tech' and innovation. However, recent approaches such as evolutionary economic geographies applied to tourism
entrepreneurship promise new avenues for research. Another chapter addressing the nexus of economic geography and tourism is provided by Dimitri Ioannides and Kristina Zampoukos (Chapter 10). They present a review of how labour is addressed within tourism geographies, and note that issues relating to the spatial dimensions of labour in the tourism industry are weakly conceptualized. The low status of tourism work – usually portrayed as low-skilled, low-paid and performed by women – contributes to this. However, they argue that recognizing and addressing the complexities of tourism work, not only in relation to work life but also beyond it, certainly also have the potential to contribute to the subdiscipline of labour geographies.

In Chapter 11, Zainub Ibrahim and Rémy Tremblay revisit the nexus of tourism and migration. They argue that the multiple definitions and conceptualizations within the field have created a blurry situation, which could be improved by developing an integrated framework for the study of lifestyle-related mobilities. Gustav Visser (Chapter 12) addresses the role of tourism in urban (re)development, particularly in the context of the Global South. He makes the point that the role of tourism is underrated in mainstream urban geography, while tourism geographies offer multiple opportunities. Hence an important conclusion is that research on tourism and urban (re)development is in its infancy and, from this aspect of a research agenda, offers many degrees of freedom.

The following three chapters address the relationship between tourism and global environmental change. Martin G. Gren and Edward H. Huijbens (Chapter 13) highlight the idea of the Anthropocene and place tourism in such a context. As they express it, in the Anthropocene, tourism has to be understood in relation to a wider Earth system with life-supporting functions. In recognizing this, tourism geographies should pay greater attention to destination stewardship and staycations. In Chapter 14, Rannveig Olafsdóttir and Hörður V. Haraldsson also call for a holistic understanding of tourism and the application of systems approaches in order to assess its impact. By integrating system analysis into tourism research, they argue, the complexity of tourism systems can be better explained and key drivers affecting the system can be identified. In Chapter 15, Robert Steiger addresses the issue of climate change and tourism. Obviously, this is a key challenge to tourism, but Steiger also sees an opportunity for tourism geographies, which he considers well suited to tackling open research questions in an interdisciplinary research field such as climate change. He calls for high-quality research to serve society; if this is done successfully, it should also improve the recognition of tourism geographies.

The final chapter of this volume, Chapter 16, addresses the issue of Big Data. Michael Bauder argues that Big Data offer great opportunities for new insights, although there is also a risk that an unconstrained emphasis on empirical data may marginalize the idea of theory-based tourism geographies. Still, in his chapter, data-driven tourism geographies are seen as one important element of a research agenda for tourism geographies.
References


