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Stephen L. Harp, *The Riviera, Exposed: An Ecohistory of Postwar Tourism and North African Labour*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022. xxii + 276 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9-78-1501763014; \$29.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9-78-1501773549; \$21.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9-78-1501763038.

Review by Andrew Smith, Queen Mary University of London.

As the song goes, when you pave paradise, a parking lot is sure to follow. In this fascinating survey of the French Riviera, Harp demonstrates how a certain vision of paradise was created on the southern coast. The book's real contribution is its focus on who that paradise was created for and its recognition of who did the hard graft along the way. This history of Nice tells the story of the most visited provincial destination in the world's most visited country. Harp's chronological framing ensures that the book becomes a history of postwar reconstruction (and that most contested of words, modernisation) as well as a reflection of the late imperial nation-state's reckoning. What emerges is a vision of postwar modernity pandering to tourists (and their money), while shielding their gaze from the attendant workforce. The spaces in which those precarious workers found shelter were increasingly washed away by a wave of touristic hygiene that was itself irrigated by the sweat of North African brows.

The book is organised into six distinct and engaging chapters. Chapters one and two look at how visitors and workers were accommodated, setting up a sharp contrast between luxury hotels and *bidonvilles*. In the third chapter, we learn about what Harp calls the "hydro-history" of the area's water and waste systems, while the fourth chapter explores how new types of pollution blighted the coast amid the expansion of the Riviera's beaches and marinas. The fifth chapter follows the construction of Nice's airport, and the final chapter takes us on a tour of the new roads which criss-crossed the coast (while the reader whizzes through the attendant traffic jams). The rich source base is also unpacked in a useful bibliographical essay at the end of the piece, illustrating the author's in-depth research in the Departmental Archives of Alpes-Maritimes and across the local press from the period. Harp's writing throughout is a pleasure to read, and it is worth emphasising the accessibility of the work which is illustrated with engaging cultural markers and references to works of film and literature throughout.

This is a welcome contribution to a growing historiography which considers how changing modes of tourism in the twentieth century altered the infrastructure needed to welcome visitors to their favoured destinations. As the foreword by the series editor Eric Zuelow reminds us, "environmental histories of tourism" (p. x) like Harp's present a refreshing intervention into the scholarship on travel and its attendant industry. Focussing on the host community gives us an insight into the "devil's bargain" of development for tourism, as Hal Rothman notably

observed.[1] On the Riviera, the shift towards short term visits (for a week or a fortnight) saw more ordinary French people take advantage of reforms ushered in by the Popular Front government. Yet, the majority of the book's action takes place in the wake of the Second World War. Harp details both the destruction wrought by the Occupation and the influential American encounter with the Riviera after the Liberation, before firmly focussing his gaze on the period made famous by Fourastié: the *trente glorieuses*. As Harp notes, Fourastié's book has become as much a primary source of the period's economic outlook as a lasting analysis, and this type of focus on the impact of development gives a useful sense of what France's postwar reconstruction meant for a much broader section of society as well as for the environment.

North African workers manned the building sites of the Riviera, part of the demographic and material expansion of Nice and Cannes. This expansion placed ever greater strain on the area's infrastructure, exacerbated by the seasonal booms in visitor numbers. Construction projects like the creation of the airport, caused environmental impacts (such as lowering the water table and straining traditional aquifers), while also creating constant noise for local residents. Harp tells a memorable story of an apartment developer who sued Air France when aircraft noise made their new Riviera apartment complex completely unsaleable. Sure enough, the expansion of the airport led to an increase in visitors, and the volume of air traffic arriving in Nice rivalled that of Paris Orly. Meanwhile, the increased waste from those visitors continued to cause problems both for the environment and for the expectations of high-paying guests (who expected clean beaches for swimming, and clean water for drinking, as well as flushing toilets and showers in their hotel rooms). Nice itself changed as a result of this so-called devil's bargain: the old town was opened up to development, with many existing residents decanted into housing schemes at the edge of town. Harp explains how forced purchases were driven by municipal authorities, but also how new housing provision was hoovered up by an influx of *rapatriés* in the final days of French Algeria. As a result, the seasonal labour force tasked with the work of transformation faced scant options: finding a billet in the sprawling *bidonvilles* or squatting in buildings left empty during development. These tactics quickly drew disapproval from authorities and opened residents up to attacks and abuse. Harp outlines horrifying incidents including arson attacks and violence against these workers.

There is here a fascinating sense of the type of "enviro-technical system" which Sara Pritchard discusses in her book on the Rhône River, *Confluence*. [2] Harp also studies the flows of water and people that reshaped the Riviera. As he notes in the introduction, this is the meaning of an ecohistory: one which explores connected histories of development through processes of environmental transformation, labour dynamics, and their wider cultural and political significance. Creating beaches that satisfied tourists was paramount: gone was the willingness to tolerate pebbles softened by a mattress hired from a vendor on the seafront. The pebble beach was to be replaced by a sandy expanse which itself had to be physically constructed. Beaches needed "fattening up" (p. 109) to accommodate tourist expectations, and the only solution for this was ever more in-fill. That sand had to come from somewhere, and Harp relates stories of dump trucks full of sand travelling from Fréjus to Cannes in 1960. Jean-Didier Urbain described the social transformation of "the beach" into a site of leisure and spectacle, but beyond social construction, Harp gives us an insight into the literal construction of the Riviera's beaches. [3]

The chapter on roads sees Harp return to somewhat familiar territory, following the excellent cultural analysis of the business of motoring in his book *Marketing Michelin*. [4] The opening up of new sites, supported by the lobbying of the Touring Club de France, meant new ways of

reaching the Riviera, often along coastal roads to find sought-after panoramic views of the Mediterranean. In *Marketing Michelin*, Harp established how France was cultivated as “the place to eat, drink and tour, and a place of modern innovation”, and this vision was a prominent theme in the marketing of the Riviera’s appeal.[5] Yet, in this work, Harp is just as focussed on the physical development of that infrastructure as on its wider cultural significance. We get a sense of the toll development took on people in the cities themselves, where gridlock prevailed. Noise and air pollution from queuing traffic represented a problem for residents and for tourists, and as so often, it appeared that it was the perceived desires of the latter group which drove authorities to seek solutions.

In his conclusion, Harp reminds us of the importance of the “tourist gaze” (p. 202) in understanding the impact of visitors on destinations. As he points out earlier, the physical “sites” of development, conservation, and everything in between are also the “sights” which draw people to visit in the first place (p. 2). This notion becomes particularly pertinent as Harp explores the environmental transformations wrought by tourism on the French Riviera. Environmental degradation, including waste, pollution, and beach construction, becomes a central theme. Harp contends that these issues are not only matters of ecological concern but also manifest as social inequalities, as the socially marginalized—based on class, race, or religion—often bear the brunt of such degradation. In highlighting these environmental concerns, Harp effectively foregrounds the underlying inequality associated with the development of the Riviera. Indeed, it is a curious point that the greatest environmental champion who emerges in the book appears to be the Prince of Monaco, whose efforts at coastal protection were inspired by a desire for conservation (p. 126).

The development of Nice is framed well within its departmental context, as well as its immediate region, frequently drawing comparison to Cannes and even to Monaco along the coast. There was also perhaps a greater opportunity for a more expansive exploration of how this mapped onto a national tourism strategy, which might help situate the story within a European context.[6] Beyond Paris, there are hints at the Mission Racine, though there are almost as many references to Florida in the United States as the so-called French Florida being created further west along the coast; Harp suggests that development threatened the Riviera, and more would be welcome on this point. Similarly, there are discussions of Spain and Italy in terms of mass tourism, though more on the guiding policy choices beyond the departmental context would have helped to frame these national responses, such as, for example, the marketing of Nice overseas by national agencies. Nevertheless, the focus Harp sustains is commendable and widening the scope of his analysis might have changed the overall emphasis on place-making—both literal and figurative—centred on the Riviera itself.

This fascinating book uncovers a history which had otherwise been landscaped and paved over. Indeed, by unpacking the environmental toll of this type of tourism, Harp asks the reader to reflect on their own travel, while also recovering the story of itinerant workers who were always beyond the frame of the holiday postcard. With few advocates and less purchase, the trace of these workers was washed away just as the beaches themselves were eroded. In a striking observation, Harp comments on the fact that the archive reading rooms themselves lie only a stone’s throw from the site of one of the largest *bidonvilles*, but that no markers nor signs indicate the space in which the men who built the region’s pleasure-palaces and amenities once sought shelter. Indeed, the images Harp presents in this book, of a Riviera undergoing transformation

by development, are not just nostalgic stills of the past, but incisive attempts to capture the process of that transformation, and to understand its wider social impact.

NOTES

[1] Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargain* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1998), p. 10.

[2] Sara B. Pritchard, *Confluence: The Nature of Technology and the Remaking of the Rhône* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp.1 -27.

[3] Jean-Didier Urbain, *Sur la plage: Moeurs et coutumes balnéaires (XIXe-XXe siècles)* (Paris: Payot, 2016).

[4] Stephen Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2001).

[5] Harp, *Marketing Michelin*, p. 281.

[6] Harp describes the way that road networks connected France and Italy, for example, and it would be interesting to see where a wider Mediterranean identity emerged alongside national contexts. Clearly the focus is very different, though Schiller effectively demonstrates the way that these sort of road networks played an integrative European role. See Frank Schiller, *Driving Europe: Building Europe on Roads in the Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

Andrew Smith
Queen Mary University of London
a.w.m.smith@qmul.ac.uk

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