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Review of: Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas

Julian Philipp

Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, jphilipp@ku.de

Julia Schiemann

University of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain, julia.schiemann97@gmail.com

Hannah Zehren

Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, hannah.zehren@ku.de

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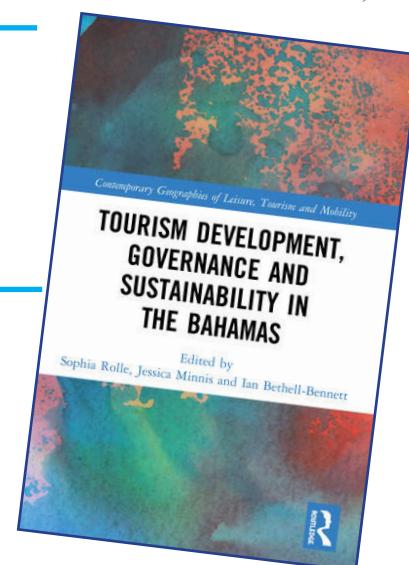
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Review of: *Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas*



Rolle, S., Minnis, J. and Bethell-Bennett, I. (Eds.) (2020) *Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas*, Abingdon, Routledge, 235 pp., ISBN: 978-0-367-46967-2.

As tourism is one of the major economic drivers worldwide, many countries and their economies depend on it. Challenges around sustainability, as well as the increasing focus on individual needs and desires, further require destinations to adapt. The extensive use of social media and urgent discussions on climate change further accelerate these developments, particularly in Small Island Development States (SIDS).

In this context, *Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas* addresses the complexity of tourism as a vital economic sector in The Bahamas, which are among the most tourism-dependent regions globally. Despite the narrow title, the insights presented in this book can be transferred to The Caribbean and other Small Island Developing States, creating an expansive display of tourism knowledge. This book draws together diverse concepts and developments regarding the changing geography of tourism and a tourism product, including local community welfare and wealth, providing an intellectual discussion on sustainability, governance, and development from the perspective of small and resilient multi-island destinations. In his foreword, Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace states that ‘Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas’ has the potential to facilitate a better understanding of tourism for practitioners and students alike.

The first part of the book describes aspects of tourism development in The Bahamas and its various implications. The first six chapters provide a good and

concise introduction and overview of tourism in The Bahamas for researchers, students, and practitioners. This part places a great focus on the sociocultural implications of tourism development and provides some critical recommendations and further research directions. However, some of the presented results are primarily descriptive, which could be developed - particularly in light of practitioners being one of the book’s target audience. Given the recent global discussions on the negative implications of mass tourism, these chapters make a timely contribution to the academic discourse. Two real-life case studies from anchor projects in specific communities or destinations within The Bahamas enhance this. More detailed light is shed on two issues that many of the Caribbean destinations, as well as SIDS or larger destinations in general, face: the changing rental and housing market and the adaptation of local and sometimes indigenous culture for tourism purposes.

The second part addresses governance as an integrative strategy and decision-making between public and private actors. In these chapters, tourism governance is seen as a tool to target different sustainability-related issues, as outlined previously. As mentioned before, The Bahamas and many similar destinations heavily rely on tourism as a significant economic source – hence, it makes sense that these chapters have a predominantly economic perspective. Aside from a more theoretically focused chapter, two case studies explore the topic of governance from an experience-oriented (Atlantis resort) and supply-oriented (courtesy campaign) perspective. Considering these different perspectives is essential for

understanding the stakeholders, intentions and processes of tourism governance and promoting its implementation by sharing knowledge that has already been gained. The chapters convey a wide range of knowledge on tourism governance and experiences, which is highly relevant for future tourism development.

Following the introductory and descriptive parts of the book, the third part brings together concepts and ideas under the umbrella of sustainable development. In a more practical approach, existing assessment tools for sustainability in tourism were examined and applied to the reality not only of The Bahamas but SIDS in general as they share many challenges, such as rising sea levels or dependence. Accordingly, a particular focus is set on climate change and a selection of response strategies that may help The Bahamas and SIDS adapt. The proposed implementation of marijuana tourism seems odd at first, however, it represents a modern and up-to-date understanding of how to develop alternative tourism paths and products to foster economic growth and entrepreneurship.

The fourth part synthesises the three major topics of development, governance and sustainability and puts them into practice by applying them to the aftermath of the 2019 hurricane 'Dorian', which had a devastating impact on The Bahamas. The two chapters deliver learning and practical recommendations for an issue that concerns most of the Caribbean islands and many other SIDS every year. In the fifth section, the book concludes by discussing different perspectives on the main topics covered in the previous sections.

Overall, the book *Tourism Development, Governance and Sustainability in The Bahamas* may be of particular interest to researchers and practitioners interested in the social, cultural and psychological effects of tourism in destinations depending on it, such as SIDS. The book features authors from both academic and practical careers within or outside of the tourism industry as well as of Bahamian and non-Bahamian backgrounds, ensuring a critical examination of the topics covered by combining different perspectives, experiences and ideas into a 'bigger picture' that may also be recognised in other geographical areas. Throughout most chapters, a good mixture of resources from the past two decades have

been included, some also dating back to the 1980s and 1990s or even back to 1936, making sure that all relevant theories, concepts and previous works are included to provide the best possible understanding and solutions.

Very few images, figures and tables are used, which could have further improved the book's readability. However, the book is written in an easily understandable way, continuously combining a) theories of well-known tourism researchers with b) background information on The Bahamas and the Caribbean and c) practical insights from the everyday life we encounter as either inhabitant of regions affected by these issues or visitors who often cannot grasp the complexity of the processes in the respective destination. Therefore, the book is an excellent fit for all those interested in a) the tourism development of The Bahamas, b) the tourism challenges and response tools applicable to SIDS at large, or c) a broader understanding and applicability of sustainability and governance – two very timely and increasingly essential development paths for countering global megatrends – in the tourism industry. Overall, despite some primarily descriptive outputs, the book's goal – to address the complexity of tourism and facilitate understanding in students and practitioners – mentioned in the foreword is achieved.

By Julian Philipp, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany (julian.phil91@gmail.com), Julia Schiemann, University of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain (julia.schiemann97@gmail.com) and Hannah Zehren, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany (hannah.zehren@gmail.com).