

2023

## Review of: Pandemics, Disasters, Sustainability, Tourism: An Examination of Impact on and Resilience in Caribbean Small Island Developing States

Andrew Halliday

University of Prince Edward Island, Canada, ahalliday@upe.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijir>



Part of the [Economics Commons](#), [Geography Commons](#), [Tourism Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Halliday, Andrew (2023) "Review of: Pandemics, Disasters, Sustainability, Tourism: An Examination of Impact on and Resilience in Caribbean Small Island Developing States," *International Journal of Islands Research*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 3.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/CDY3-6T28>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijir/vol4/iss1/3>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Current Publications at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Islands Research by an authorized editor of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact [arrow.admin@tudublin.ie](mailto:arrow.admin@tudublin.ie), [aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie](mailto:aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie), [vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie](mailto:vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

---

## Review of: *Pandemics, Disasters, Sustainability, Tourism: An Examination of Impact on and Resilience in Caribbean Small Island Developing States*

---



---

Bethell-Bennett, I., Rolle, S.A., Minnis, J. and Okumus, F. (Eds.) (2022) *Pandemics, Disasters, Sustainability, Tourism: An Examination of Impact on and Resilience in Caribbean Small Island Developing States*. 265 pp. Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley. ISBN: 978-1-80382-107-8. (advanced copy)

---

The matter of resilience in small island developing states (SIDS) has been a key aspect of the scholarly pursuits of studying islands. Indeed, the field of Island Studies identifies the juxtaposition of vulnerability-resilience as a defining characteristic of the continental-island divide in the understanding of islands. Hence, the rallying call of Island Studies to ensure islands are studied ‘on their own terms’.

It is in this context that *Pandemics, Disasters, Sustainability, Tourism: An examination of impact on and resilience in Caribbean small island developing states* has emerged. This is an edited volume, with three of the four editors affiliated with the University of The Bahamas (Bethell-Bennett, Rolle, Minnis), and the fourth (Okumus) with the University of Central Florida. There are nineteen contributors to this book, representing numerous institutions in the Caribbean and Florida regions. It is a welcome contribution to the literature on SIDS in the Caribbean region from a mostly local perspective and those doing research in the region.

The editors indicate this text has been written for ‘scholars, enthusiasts, and others interested in the study of tourism’ (p. xxvii). The main subject matter deals with the dominant position of the tourism sector within the economies of SIDS in the Caribbean region, the socioeconomic impacts of disasters (including the COVID-19 pandemic) on tourism and the way forward or resilience strategies of Caribbean SIDS after such shock events.

In framing this volume, the editors highlight recent disasters affecting the region: 2008 financial crisis, 2010 Haitian earthquake, Zika & Chikungunya outbreaks, 2012 Hurricane Sandy (Jamaica), 2017 Hurricanes Irma and Maria (Barbuda, Dominica, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas), 2019 Hurricane Dorian (The Bahamas), and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The editors also place their argument in historical context, pointing to the power asymmetries including the dependence on foreign direct investment and the legacy of colonialism, which still bind the global south to the global north in this disadvantaged position. The metaphor of an octopus is used with

*its tentacles linked with tourism development in these states [global south], independent and non-independent, with bases in the center [global north] (p. 2).*

The editors further point that,

*[t]hese spaces are historically, geographically, economically, socially, and developmentally connected, sometimes yoked together by colonialism’s legacy. So, Caribbean SIDS’ twenty-first century reliance on tourism has been as much about colonial patterns of development as was slavery and the plantation (p. 3).*

The volume sets out to understand how the aforementioned disasters and COVID-19 ‘shaped Caribbean resilience and sustainability of tourism’ while also exploring how these SIDS with tourism centric economies ‘rebound’ from these experiences (p.4; p.6).

The central role of tourism in the Caribbean island economies is uncontested. The proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe led to significant impacts on these states and their citizenry. The direct and indirect tourism businesses and employees have faced long periods of curtailed tourism activity which had not resumed to pre-pandemic levels as of the writing of this volume. Indeed, a large number of tourism businesses did not survive the pandemic and have closed their doors for good. Therefore the timeliness of this volume is paramount.

While dealing with natural disasters and pandemics in a tourism context, the book is split into two distinct parts. The first four chapters focus on economic and social impacts, while the subsequent nine chapters examine tourism resilience as illustrated through chapter case studies. The fourteenth and final chapter is the conclusion penned by the three University of The Bahamas affiliated editors.

The first part of the book utilised qualitative methods including surveys and interviews to examine the psychosocial and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on accommodation workers in Negril, Jamaica and community-based tourism enterprises in St. Elizabeth and St. Andrew, Jamaica; and, socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and Hurricane Dorian on outer island residents in the Bahamas.

The second part of the book is certainly more varied than the first part, looking at a range of strategies employed by various Caribbean SIDS and their composite islands including Grand Exuma and Grand Bahama in The Bahamas, The Bahamas as a whole, Puerto Rico and Barbados. A few chapters also examine whole-of-region issues proposing frameworks and models to address such challenges as sargassum seaweed (Chapter 9) and transitory efforts towards a better, more sustainable model of tourism (Chapter 7) and specifically in the post-covid world (Chapter 13).

The focus of this part of the volume is in contributing to the debate around how to understand and address the post-pandemic belief to 'build back better' while attempting to address some of these core sectoral challenges. The key

focus centres upon the importance of strong state level governance and policy development in both navigating the external shock and in the subsequent post-shock period and efforts of 'rebound' and revitalisation. These factors also hold true for longer duration shocks such as climate change and strategies around adaptation and mitigation. There are also lessons within this volume for other tourism dependent islands in other regions of the world too, as we collectively emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic moving forward.

The book is broad in scope purporting to cover the Caribbean SIDS and region. Given the majority of the editors are Bahamians, it is perhaps not surprising, but this reader notes that of the thirteen content chapters across both parts, seven focus either solely or jointly on The Bahamas. In Part Two in particular, six of the nine content chapters fell into this category. Meanwhile, in Part One of the volume dealing with economic and social impacts, three of the four chapters dealt with Jamaica, with Chapter One and Chapter Two focusing on different aspects of the same study. Thus, the scope of these sections in this volume could have benefited from further diversification of content and Caribbean island states.

Perhaps, hearing from other tourism dependent nations such as St. Lucia or Antigua and Barbuda would have strengthened this volume. A thought, perhaps for the future, is that further investigation of the experiences of subnational island jurisdictions in the Caribbean in navigating these same external shocks and the metropole-island relationship in addressing such challenges for islands such as Aruba, the British Virgin Islands (BVI) and the US Virgin Islands (USVI) would add to the knowledge base.

Regarding this text, the editors have done a fine job in structuring the volume with two complementary but distinct parts. This layout provides clarity and consistency in shaping this volume, and I greatly enjoyed the thoughtful introduction and conclusion provided by the editors which neatly framed the contributions. The utilisation of abstracts and key words at the beginning of each chapter was also very helpful in indicating their intent and focus. I would recommend this text to those interested in understanding more about the study

of island tourism in the Caribbean region, across a multitude of disciplines or interdisciplinary perspectives or backgrounds.

By Andrew Halliday, Island Studies Program, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. [ahalliday@upei.ca](mailto:ahalliday@upei.ca).