

Book Review: *Archipelago Tourism: Policies and Practices*

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ABSTRACT

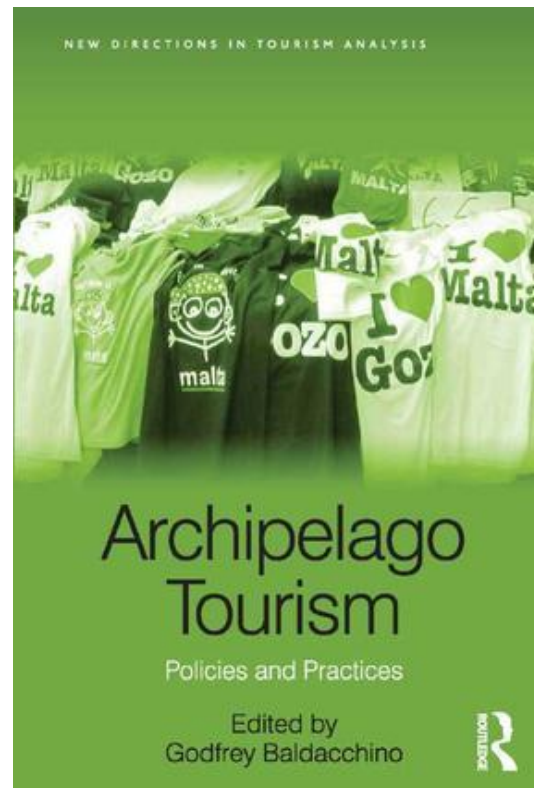
Review of *Archipelago Tourism: Policies and Practices*, editor, Godfrey Baldacchino. Routledge, 2015. ISBN: 978-14724-24303.

In *Archipelago Tourism: Policies and Practices*, editor Godfrey Baldacchino compiles an extensive series of case studies developed by tourism academics and professionals from around the world about issues facing archipelago tourism. Baldacchino provides the reader with similar case studies to facilitate direct comparison as well as with more disparate cases by grouping them according to geographic proximity.

In contrast to the perception of ease and relaxation associated with islands as leisure destinations, *Archipelago Tourism* addresses the challenges of and incipient unrest in multi-island destinations as well as changing perspectives on tourism policies.

The work identifies an all-encompassing definition of the term “archipelago” to explain the domination/subordination dynamics between the main island and other islands in the chain. Moreover, the definition enables the inclusion of not just island chains but also of entire regions like the Caribbean. Reframing the definition allows for a broader discussion around collaborative tourism marketing and growth strategies, reducing the cost of regional travel and potentially

enhancing inter-island connectivity.



The challenges faced by tourism professionals around the world vary by country, of course. However, islands are potentially seriously affected by transportation issues along with environmental and cultural degradation. Establishing the drumbeat of sustainable

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development is critical for the survival of the industry.

Overcoming the geographical challenges presented by the scattering of islands is becoming more readily recognized as key to the development of the industry. Plans are frequently made to build more robust infrastructure to facilitate the movement of people and goods, although there are several instances in which implementing these plans proved cost prohibitive, relegating them to the shelves of a tourism office.

The case is made for the benefits of the tourism industry. It has the ability to reverse population decline and to create new sources of economic growth. The contributors also lift the veil on the potentially negative impact of tourism, especially on small populations. Despite the financial benefits, local populations do not want to have their indigenous cultures overrun or diluted. In many examples provided in the book, an external tourism model often prevails because foreign entities can meet the high investment costs. This challenge is even more pronounced on peripheral islands in the archipelago. The lack of a real local ownership component in this model reduces the level of wage localization and the lion's share of tourism revenue is exported from the country. In the case of Cape Verde, the local/foreign divide is exacerbated leading to social issues such as marginalization, ghettoization and crime that negatively impact the country's image and result in reduced visitor numbers.

Marketing and branding issues prove to be significant challenges in archipelagos. The question of identity becomes interesting when one considers heterogeneous cultures across islands in the same chain. Marketing experts

have often created branding images that neatly put package archipelagos in the "island" box—natural beauty, smiling natives and no problems. Case studies demonstrate the main consequences of this contrived image—the development of a non-place that does not attract high-end tourism or the commodification of local cultures that do not exploit opportunities for differentiation.

Archipelago Tourism clearly makes the case for local inclusion in destination branding to communicate an authentic message that differentiates the country and increases wage localization to support the economy. The best example of this was illustrated in the case study of La Réunion in the Mascarene Archipelago.

There is no doubt that tourism can outperform and ultimately replace industries like agriculture and fisheries as a main driver of economic growth. In examining successful cases of archipelagic tourism, there is one element that seems to be missing—education of the local population. Retaining local people to live and work on peripheral islands is a vexing problem in archipelagos. Education tied to hospitality and entrepreneurship would be one of the best ways to develop human capital and to make the destination more attractive for both people and investments. One wonders whether this will be explored in another edition in this series.

The case studies do construct a strong narrative—that the real value in tourism is the local component. It concludes that the most effective strategy for developing a sustainable industry is providing efficient transportation and hotel infrastructure, nurturing local culture and entrepreneurship and ultimately, ensuring a broader local distribution of tourism dollars.

Included in the volume is a chapter about The Bahamas: Rolle, S. A. (2015). The Bahamas: Individual island branding for competitiveness in archipelago tourism. In G. Baldacchino (Ed.), *Archipelago tourism: Policies and practices* (pp. 163-179). London, Eng.: Routledge.