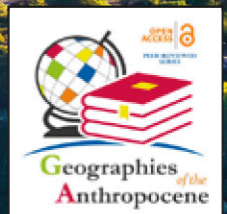


# HUMAN MOBILITY, MIGRATION & TOURISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Gian Luigi Corinto, Glen Farrugia (Editors)

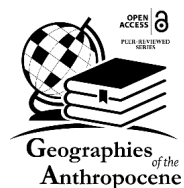
Foreword by Geoffrey Lipman

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# Human Mobility, Migration and Tourism in the Anthropocene

Gian Luigi Corinto, Glen Farrugia  
*Editors*



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Gian Luigi Corinto, Glen Farrugia (Eds.)

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## 6. COVID-19 pandemic and tourism. (Not) Getting back to normal in tourism-dependent Pacific island economies.<sup>1</sup>

*Beatrice Ruggieri<sup>2</sup>, Elisa Magnani<sup>3</sup>*

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the tourism industry globally, particularly impacting tourism-dependent island economies already suffering from climate-related hazards and disasters. The lack of tourism and related mobilities from march 2020 caused one of the biggest economic contractions in history. Nonetheless, even if confronted with severe losses of income and in the absence of effective political responses, many Pacific Islanders and businesses have been able to cope with the tourist crisis, both relying on customary knowledge, systems, and practices and rapidly adapting the tourism market to the new reality.

The post-pandemic recovery is being represented as a unique opportunity to reset entrenched systems and enhance policies that can favor a just green recovery in different sectors, tourism included. In this respect, it has been suggested to substitute the globalized international flows with more sustainable local/regional ones (Seyfi, Hall, Saarinen, 2022) and to consider the post-pandemic recovery as a stimulus to move toward more ethical forms of tourism, by paying attention to its environmental impacts and to its uneven kinopolitics (Sheller, 2021a). Through an in-depth literature review, this chapter aims to elaborate preliminary considerations on the necessity to resist and restructure unsustainable tourism models in Pacific SIDS after the pandemic.

### **Keywords:**

COVID-19, Tourism, SIDS, post-pandemic recovery, mobility justice

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the tourism industry on a global scale. While the reduction of flights and cruise ships during lockdown has positively affected global carbon emissions (Gössling *et al.*, 2021), locally the decrease of leisure mobilities due to border closures has had a severe impact especially on tourism-dependent island economies, already suffering from climate change impacts and facing several economic and socio-ecological challenges. Indeed, if the virus has not reached the majority of Pacific Island states and territories due to their preventive efforts to stop international arrivals to preserve health systems - contextually causing delays in the repatriation of citizens stranded abroad (McClure, 2021) - the lack of tourism and related mobilities from march 2020 caused one of the biggest economic contractions in their history, with remittances and private investments that suddenly plummeted. Nonetheless, is it worth noting that, even if confronted with severe losses of income and in the absence of effective political measures, many Pacific Islanders have been able to cope by relying on customary knowledge, systems, and practices (Scheyvens & Movono, 2020) while many businesses have been able to rapidly adapt to the new tourism market (procedures of health control, digitalization, promotion of nomadic work).

In this context, the post-pandemic recovery is being represented as a unique opportunity to reset entrenched systems (Foley *et al.*, 2022; Gössling *et al.*, 2021; Lamers & Student, 2021) and enhance policies that can favor a just green recovery in different sectors, tourism included. In this respect, it has been suggested that substituting the globalized international flows with more sustainable local/regional ones might contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (Seyfi *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the post-pandemic recovery might be a stimulus to move toward more ethical forms of tourism (Sheller, 2021a), thus paying attention to its environmental impacts as well as to how tourist practices both affect the governance of movement and are impacted by kinopolitics.

Through an in-depth literature review, ranging from tourism studies, to development and mobilities studies perspectives, the aim of this chapter is to elaborate preliminary considerations on the necessity to resist and restructure unsustainable tourism models in Pacific small island states after the pandemic. Specifically, the present chapter attempts to give answers to the following questions: have tourism practices changed in tourism-dependent Pacific Island economies after the pandemic disruptions? Is COVID-19 an opportunity to rethink the entire model of tourism in the Pacific region and make it more

sustainable, thus providing economic benefits without sacrificing socio-environmental concerns? Or is the crave for a fast economic recovery and the uneven pressure on tourism-dependent economies, such as small island states, leading to “getting back to normal, even if normal was the problem”?

## **2. COVID-19 impacts on tourism-dependent island economies**

Tourism may be counted among the sectors most affected by COVID-19, particularly since it had been experiencing a continuous growth in the decades prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, being able to cope successfully with previous health crisis such as SARS, in 2003, and the global economic crisis in 2008 (Chenguang Wu *et al.*, 2022; Figueroa *et al.*, 2021).

Unlike previous crises, such as disasters-led crises, COVID-19 has produced a totally new scenario in which the shock does not strike the material infrastructures, but the very tourist flows (Arbulú *et al.*, 2021b), involving an unprecedented number of people and countries, thus posing new challenges in terms of management and postpandemic recovery (Arbulú *et al.*, 2021a, 2021b; Okafor *et al.*, 2022). The governmental responses put in place immediately after the recognition of the global diffusion of COVID-19, in fact, produced a dramatic stop to international arrivals, up to a 74% reduction compared to the previous year, accounting for a loss of 1.3 trillion US dollars (UNWTO, 2021). This lack of flows, moreover, does not only concern tourists but involves workers, food and other imports, which may have particularly relevant impacts in the case of remote islands (Arbulú *et al.*, 2021b). Tourism is, in fact, a labor-intensive industry, which employs both skilled and unskilled workers, both in high income and low-income countries; during and after the pandemic, the latter in particular, have been exposed to a severe risk of falling into poverty or extreme poverty (Sun *et al.*, 2021), highlighting the inherent vulnerability of the sector and its dependency on international flows (Lamers & Student, 2021).

All this considered, COVID-19 may be regarded - in general, but for the tourist sector in particular - as a multiperiod event that “simultaneously disrupts supply, demand, and productivity channels, that is almost perfectly synchronized within and across countries, and that has cataclysmic health, social, and economic implications not just for the foreseeable few weeks after the crisis, but for a long time period” (Ludvingson *et al.*, 2020). The spread of COVID-19, moreover, boosted a public discourse on the interconnectedness between diseases and climate change, with all TVs and newspapers in the

first half of 2020 highlighting the improved quality of the (global) air derived from the closure of industries and flights, evidencing the role of the travel and transportation industry in the massive emission of greenhouse gases, and bringing about a critical reflection on the environmental costs of global capitalism (Gössling *et al.*, 2021).

Up to 2019, island tourism had experienced a growth across all continents, with tourism having become the economic backbone of many islands, both mass destination - such as Mallorca, the Canary island and some Greek islands - which were struck harder by the pandemic, and smaller ones, particularly those offering “alternative” tourist experiences or being mostly visited by domestic tourists, such as the island of Ikaria in Greece, which have coped better, being not so much dependent on international tourist arrivals. Among islands, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are especially sensitive to climate, economic, but also health crisis, as the spread of COVID-19 has revealed (Foley *et al.*, 2022; Movono *et al.*, 2022; Okafor *et al.*, 2022). The islands mostly affected by the limitation to international mobility were, in fact, SIDS, the majority of which rely significantly on tourist revenues (UNCTAD, 2020): Figueroa & Rotarou (2021) state that in 2019 travel and tourism represented more than 15% of the total share of employment in 44 countries, among which 27 island nations, including 24 SIDS, of which 16 in the Caribbean. Three of such countries, in particular, have been recognized as most vulnerable to the present tourist crisis on the base of the contribution of tourism on their GDP: Fiji, Mauritius and Jamaica (UNWTO, 2021, in Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021). The lack of tourism has had dramatic impacts on local households incomes - with a significant increase in poverty and extreme poverty among the population of these islands, particularly in the area of the Pacific (Lamers & Student, 2021) – and on natural and cultural heritage as well, being these disregarded as a consequence of the “missing” revenues of international tourism, thus requiring significant financial assistance to counteract the effects of the pandemic (Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021).

While the impacts and reactions to the pandemic have been diverse in each SIDS, the majority of them decided to close the borders and avoid the spread of the virus within their boundaries (Lamers & Student, 2021; Foley *et al.*, 2022), and COVID-19 helped highlighting their strong dependency on connections with the outside world to secure their economic sustainability. Furthermore, “for many SIDS, health, economic, and social impacts have combined, resulting in compounding shocks, and often amplifying pre-existing sustainability challenges” (Foley *et al.*, 2022, p.2), which implied the

need to resort to a wide array of coping strategies to survive in the absence of cash-wage earnings (such as selling livestock or even land, or going back to agriculture or grazing).

Moreover, as a side effect, the pandemic has limited the capacity of many countries - among which several SIDS - to implement climate actions planned at the moment of the outbreak of the disease, diverting attention and funding towards economic recovery, to which the label “green” has often been attached (Foley *et al.*, 2022).

### *2.1 Impacts of COVID-19 in Pacific Island States*

Following the trend of growing international arrivals, the year 2020 was expected to be another year of strong growth in terms of tourism (UNWTO, 2020). However, as a crisis-sensitive sector, tourism was severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic with an average decline of 22% worldwide in international arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 and a decline of 33% for the Asia-Pacific region, which was the worst hit (Kumar & Patel, 2021). In particular, the negative impacts of COVID-19 on tourism have been especially severe for Pacific Island States (PICs), heavily dependent on this sector for their economies. As a preventive measure to safeguard their precarious health systems, PICs were among the first countries to suddenly close their borders, even before the pandemic was officially declared by the OMS. This resulted in a reduced number of infections, but it also produced in an almost complete isolation. As a consequence, much of the tourist economy was impacted: hotels, resorts, businesses, formal and informal touristic services closed almost immediately, causing major disruptions to one of the most labor-intensive sectors of the economy. As observed by Movono *et al.* (2022), COVID-19 disruptions resulted in an unprecedented isolation and massive job losses, leading many people engaged in tourism-related activities and business to go back home, mostly in rural villages and settlements. This is the case of Fiji, the first tourist destination in the Pacific (Everett *et al.*, 2018). Unsurprisingly, since Fiji is highly reliant on tourism for its economy - 34% of its GDP, according to Gounder (2020) - and development, the country has been one of the most affected in terms of economic damages. Connell (2021) highlights that, three months after border closure, half of tourism businesses had closed down and most of the employees had returned to rural areas, putting new pressures on resources and creating new disputes over access and land tenure. The return to rural areas was especially necessary because most of the urban employees in the tourism sector lacked access to land and did not

have ongoing agriculture activities. In some countries such as Fiji, Kiribati, and Tonga, most of those people who lost their jobs were women working in hotels and restaurants (Connell, 2021; Reksa *et al.*, 2021). Women entrepreneurs, in particular, are more exposed to the risk of business bankruptcy in the tourism sector since it is more difficult for them to access financial assistance (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2020). In addition to the effects on transportation, accommodation services and jobs, the pandemic indirectly affected different sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and construction (Reksa *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, since tourism collapsed, tax revenues plummeted too, causing several disruptions to other sensitive economic sectors in SIDS.

While borders were never entirely closed - humanitarian flights, fishing fleets, cargo ships and yachts continued to operate (Connell, 2021) - the impact on tourism was dramatic for PICs, which were cut off from the rest of the world. Since mobility and tourism systems and dynamics are inextricably connected, the border shut-down caused a significant restriction to international migration, especially to Australia and New Zealand, reducing possibilities to move to generate new incomes and to send remittances back home. At the same time, migrant workers in host countries experienced unemployment and income stresses, thus facing several obstacles to contribute to remittances flows towards their families, strongly dependent on them for their sustenance and to face different kind of hazards. Furthermore, different studies on COVID-19 and (im)mobilities underline that the resettlement of many in rural areas and the frustration caused by losing jobs and being stuck at home because of the restrictions of movement, resulted in a significant rise in domestic violence (Connell, 2021; Wallis & McNeill, 2021).

### **3. Coping strategies and practices**

As Gössling *et al.* (2021, p. 2) recall, in the first months of 2020 the world faced an unprecedented situation, in which “within the space of months, the framing of the global tourism system moved from overtourism [...] to non-tourism, vividly illustrated by blogs and newspaper articles depicting popular tourism sites in ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs periods, international and domestic tourism declined precipitously over a period of weeks”.

The responses to this totally new situation varied from country to country, with the majority of them - and island States in particular - choosing to close their borders as the most immediate solution to contain the spread of the virus, and others introducing some compulsory sanitary practices such as the

use of facial masks, hand-sanitizing, spatial distancing, often accompanied by biopolitical control measures such as targeted testing and tracking (UNCTAD, 2022). The response, moreover, varied significantly depending on the level of vulnerability (Lamers & Student, 2021) and resilience (Okafor *et al.*, 2022) of each country. These two concepts have become main keywords in the public discourse concerning the pandemic crisis, including health, economic and environmental aspects. Both, however, are very slippery concepts, in that they do not offer an agreed upon definition and have been used, in general, to discuss of areas affected by one or more dramatic changes, spanning from terrorism and social unrest, to financial and economic crisis, the climate crisis and now the global pandemic and the consequent tourist crisis, as well.

The complexity of the tourist crisis scattering from the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for a response that is not localized but necessarily global, due to the transnational nature of the environmental mobilities and flows of tourism, and the solutions need to encompass strategies aiming at tackling both the vulnerability and resilience challenges that low-income countries, particularly SIDS, are confronted with (Lamers & Student, 2021).

Among tourism resilience strategies highlighted by literature (Sharma *et al.*, 2021), recurring to the promotion of domestic tourism is one of the most evident, together with an investment in the digitalization of the sector (Okafor *et al.*, 2022), including the creation of virtual tours (Nautiyal & Polus, 2022). Domestic tourism represents, as a matter of fact, a highly vital sector, capable of generating significant tourist revenues even in areas outside the range of international flows, thus opening new and diversified development perspectives, while re-distributing incomes from core to peripheral areas, and empowering local communities without the necessity to invest in infrastructures required by the international tourist sector (Canavan, 2013; Scott & Gössling, 2015). Proximity tourism may thus play a key role in the debate on Anthropocene, in that it stimulates the reduction of long-haul flights (Rantala *et al.*, 2020).

However, while some countries have been able to experiment alternative strategies of local development, including some new tourist strategies, such as investing in the promotion of domestic tourism, others - particularly tourism-dependent countries - are still relying on economic stimulus to support the sector (Okafor *et al.*, 2022). SIDS, in particular, are less likely to recur to domestic tourism to face shocks and disasters since domestic tourism only accounts for a very small percentage of their GDPs (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2013). Thus, in the absence of a deep reorganization of the tourism industry

in SIDS, recurring to it would not represent an alternative solution to make up for the shortfall in external arrivals and to generate a significant contribution in terms of socio-economic benefits for their populations.

### *3.1 Examples from PICs*

As Movono & Scheyvens (2022a, p.125) observe, “the partial collapse of the global tourism system due to COVID-19 has revealed tourism’s vulnerability and susceptibility to sudden shocks, especially in SIDS countries of the Pacific region”. In the absence of rapid and effective political responses, Pacific Islanders showed substantial adaptive capacities and resilience in finding alternative strategies to meet their needs. These strategies were not new but were identified in traditional knowledge, systems and practices. Indeed, while it is important to shed light on the pressures that urban to rural migration - return migration - put on land and ocean resources, it is also relevant to highlight that rediscovering and renewing those knowledges helped thousands of people to overcome the decline of tourism related jobs. Movono *et al.* (2022) emphasize the fact that many Pacific Island people, especially young people, have relearned about Traditional Indigenous knowledge, diversified their skills and reconnected with their socio-ecological systems. Kinship and community network constituted a safety net to people who had to return to their ancestral land. Furthermore, going back to the land helped communities to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices and challenge the dominant capitalist and neoliberal tourism model (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Some of the coping strategies adopted by Pacific islanders included both cash and cashless practices such as growing food and fishing, handcrafting, selling flowers and food in local markets, trading or bartering goods (Scheyvens & Movono, 2020; Movono & Scheyvens, 2021; Connell, 2021). Bartering in the absence of cash wage-earning, in particular, has become commonplace in many Pacific Island Countries and elsewhere (Gunia & Lewicki, 2020).

Simultaneously, it is important not to idealize this physical and metaphorical return to the land, thus underlining the difficulties of both urban and rural dwellers to adapt to life together in a customary setting after the pandemic (Movono *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, it is worth noting that not everyone could adapt by recurring to traditional systems. Indeed, the urban poor were the most affected because of lack of access to land elsewhere and increased commodity prices (Davila & Wilkes, 2020). Referring to Fiji, many argued that not everyone had land and rural homes to return to, thus warning about the risk of romanticizing the Fijian way of life (Doherty, 2020). For instance,

comparing Fiji and Samoa to Vanuatu, Connell (2021) further notices that, with a more traditional and informal economy, the latter was better prepared to “survive the economic slump” instead of more modernized Pacific countries. So, even in PICs, often described as being similar in geographical, economic, and social features, multiple and diverse responses to the tourism crisis due to the pandemic emerged. Many of these responses included a return migration to rural and customary land, other led to immobility and further marginalization and vulnerabilities.

#### **4. COVID-19 and tourism: proposals for a just green recovery**

COVID-19 has been regarded by some as an opportunity to “critically reconsider tourism’s growth trajectory” (Gössling *et al.*, 2021) and reset the global economic system, working as a catalyst for a change (Gössling *et al.*, 2021; Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021; Mkono *et al.*, 2022; McNeely, 2021), a change that should incorporate concepts that have been widely used in the global discourse connected to the climate crisis, such as adaptation or resilience, but in the light of the global health crisis and the need to promote post-pandemic recovery via the empowerment of local communities and the implementation of sustainable policies that could prompt climate actions too in the fields of agriculture and traditional activities, but also in tourism. These actions would align with the implementation of the SDG, in an effort to “build a sector that is sustainable, more inclusive, and resilient” (Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021, p. 10).

Some islands have been able to use the economic stimulus aimed at addressing the health crisis to promote a change in the travel industry, towards a more sustainable tourist sector, i.e. via the development of small-scale ecotourism activities - that could play a relevant role in supporting community resilience - or via the acceleration of the digitalization of the sector - that could prompt the diffusion of a new environmental-friendly and economically sound business model (Foley *et al.*, 2022). Technological innovation is mentioned as a main advancement in the industry, prompted by the response to COVID-19, together with personnel training, the development of new services and online education; moreover, investment in technological advancement may support smart tourist destinations, a concept which, despite having no univocal definition as yet, may include experiences in which smart tourists interact dynamically with each other and the destination, and co-create their experience while there, in a safe and inclusive way (Bulchand-Gidum-



al, 2022). However, the number of studies on the topic is still too scarce to produce a sound framework for post-pandemic recovery and this could be detrimental to tourist development in islands, particularly the most remote and isolated ones (Matiza & Stabbet, 2021). Moreover, as Sheller (2021a) observes, it is important to pay attention to the excessive encouragement of digitalization, nomadic work and greenwashed tourism practices, since these are not viable alternative solution to avoid the “old normal”.

The promotion of domestic tourism, in particular, seems to be a widespread strategy to prompt tourist revenues but also to reshape the domestic demand toward a more open-air experience, that avoids the overcrowded urban areas. This option, however, does not seem particularly viable for many SIDS - among which many PICs - due to the way in which the tourism sector is currently organized there, and thus a switch toward a regional (other than domestic) tourism seems more appropriate. In general, the crisis has helped developing more environmental-friendly tourist products, which might contribute to a more sustainable industry in the future. The lack of international demand, nonetheless, could be detrimental even for the domestic one, in that nationals cannot rely any longer on the revenues earned within the international tourist sector to conduct their holidays locally (Chenguang Wu *et al.*, 2022).

While supporting the implementation of a greener and more sustainable tourism, more domestic and more based on the promotion of natural and cultural resources, islands should also aim at making an effort towards the (sustainable) diversification of the local economies – including agriculture, wine-making, services (Figuerola & Rotarou, 2021). In this respect, some islands have started marketing under the label “Covid-free island” that offers a guarantee to particularly worried tourists. In this regard, the Fiji Government has promoted a major campaign promising that the archipelago was “open for happiness”, mostly targeting international tourists - especially from New Zealand and Australia - while apparently forgetting to target the wellbeing of its population, especially of tourism workers (Movono & Scheyvens, 2022b).

A measure frequently quoted well before the spread of COVID-19 is the reduction of long-haul flights accompanied by the extension in lengths of the holidays, particularly in remote destinations such as SIDS, which could reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted during the journey (Gössling *et al.*, 2018; Scott *et al.*, 2012; Gössling *et al.*, 2009; Figuerola & Rotarou, 2021): these measures would support a switch in the sector’s focus from “quantity” to “quality”, particularly in connection with the empowerment of domestic tourism based on experiential, rural, and active tourist products (Figuerola &

Rotarou, 2021). The extension of holidays length could also be supported by the opportunities revealed by teleworking, which could open up many island tourist destinations to a new market of long-stays visitors, encouraged by affordable living costs, the presence of Internet connections and remoteness, interpreted as a guarantee of being “Covid-free”. The psychological side of the tourist promotion - with models being already studied by scholars such as Kock *et al.* (2020) - becomes particularly relevant in the post-pandemic, both in respect to the need to offer products and destinations that can be advertised as safe in respect to health requirements, and in terms of helping the tourist industry influence the tourist consumer behaviors towards more sustainable demands (Gössling *et al.*, 2021).

However, due to the unpredictability of the post-pandemic scenario, the recovery of tourism to pre-pandemic performances is not expected anytime soon - and surely not before 2023 (Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021): as a consequence, the risk that the tourist sector simply heads back to its previous “normal business as usual” paradigm is quite relevant, particularly for the most remote and isolated islands, such as Tuvalu. This small island might not have the means to compete with larger and more accessible islands of the same area in terms of innovation, thus having the only option to go back to the previous strategies, setting aside any intention to switch to more resilient and sustainable practices that they might have had in the past: tourist revenues are so important for their local systems that they cannot face the option of not being able to receive the same amount (Foley, 2022; Figueroa & Rotarou, 2021).

The risk of getting back to normal may result in a stop to the implementation of the environmental and climate measures that were started prior to the upsurging of COVID-19, to overcompensate for the loss of tourist revenues, while “there is an urgent need not to return to business-as-usual when the crisis is over”, promoting “a transformation of the global tourism system more aligned to the SDGs” (Gössling *et al.*, 2021, p. 15), to “make the environment matter in post-pandemic tourism” (Mkono *et al.*, 2022). An interesting example is that promoted by the Sunx (Strong Universal Network) Malta – Climate Friendly Travel programme, a “support system for Travel & Tourism stakeholders to build Climate Resilience in line with the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Paris Agreement”, that tackles the impacts of climate change to create benefits for local stakeholders (SunxMalta).

#### 4.1 Mobility justice for alternative tourism futures

Following (un)natural disasters, international development aid and government responses often seek to rebuild the old tourism infrastructure as a recovery strategy. However, in the light of a just green recovery from the pandemic, specific attention must be paid to alternative and regenerative tourism practices that involve “non-capitalist forms of ownership, non-monetary exchange and beneficial community-based development” (Sheller, 2021b, p. 1437). This is especially needed in times of compounding, accelerating crises, such as the climate crisis and the (im)mobility crisis generated by global uneven kinopolitics. In this regard, travel and tourism can be identified as mobility regimes that respectively favor élites mobilities and hinder non-élites ones, specifically in island states, where “the preferred mobile subject” - the international tourist - is encouraged, while aspiring migrants are often prevented to move (Sheller, 2020). The current tourism system is supported by uneven power relationships that have been clearly exposed by the coronavirus pandemic disruptions and that have prompted thoughts on who controls human mobilities (included tourism flows), on who benefits from these forms of control and on who suffers from them. Therefore, if the aim is to elaborate and build a just green recovery that includes tourism, it is crucial to integrate a mobility justice perspective that sheds light on how to imagine and build just tourism infrastructures and systems. Rethinking tourism for a just recovery means to address the relationship between tourism and justice, in which the mobility dimension plays a key-role (Sheller, 2018; 2020, 2021; Guia, 2021). The adoption of this perspective, for instance, leads to interrogate the transformative value of responsible tourism, which has been criticized for its failure in recognizing the unjust structures of the industry and its exploitative nature that is at the core of distributive, procedural and recognition injustices in many places and territories around the world (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Justice is crucial to move towards fairer modes of tourism. But, as some have observed, there will be no justice without degrowing tourism, meaning that tourism must be less seen as an industry or synonym of development and more as part of the larger socio-economic byo-physical system (Hall, 2009). However, while the research agenda on tourism and degrowth is emerging, scholars who critically engage in the debate are still on the margins in tourism studies (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2019). In addition, as Sheller (2021b) provocatively argues, the time may have come to ask how to imagine alternative post-tourism futures for islands and archipelagos, such as those in the Caribbean and the Pacific region. As previously underlined, a key-aspect

of alternative post-tourism island futures is the need to abandon “quick fix” disasters policies and return to work with island Indigenous communities to “reimagine regenerative economies and resilient ecologies that are grounded in more just relations of mobility and connection” (p.1445), e. g. through the rediscovery of biodiversity preservation practices as well as of agro-ecological knowledge and sustainable food growing. In this regard, claims for mobility justice will contribute to build more robust alternatives of tourism, far from “business as usual” extractive models and closer to ideas of “tourism commons” and “justice tourism” (Sheller, 2021a; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; 2020), which have the potential to reset tourism for the benefit of both ecological protection and social justice in tourism-dependent economies such as those of small islands and SIDS.

## **5. Conclusions. (Not) Going back to normal: attempts to build a more ethical tourism**

Some of the consequences of COVID-19 may be regarded as opportunities to introduce changes to the global economic system, including the tourism system. As imaginable, the simultaneous loss of many jobs and the resultant social problems encouraged the desire to re-establish tourism (Connell, 2021). Nonetheless, a “return to the old normal” for many PICs would be not only problematic - at least in the short term, since many consequences of the pandemic breakdown would inevitably persist long after infection rates fall (Foley *et al.*, 2022) -, but also far from being desirable. In the context of multiple crises, indeed, it is time to resist, rethink and reorganize the general unsustainability of existing modes of tourism and, if there is a time to do it, this would be it (Sheller, 2021a). The pandemic has been framed as an opportunity to “reset” entrenched systems and enhance policies that can favor a just green recovery in different sectors, tourism included (Foley *et al.*, 2022; Hawkes, 2020), thus supporting the implementation of the SDG, “ensuring a more resilient, inclusive, carbon neutral, and resource efficient future” (UNWTO, 2020c). As Sheller (2021) points out, this is a compelling moment not only to rebuild tourism-dependent economies but to find new approaches to reduce over-dependence on tourism and build more ethical, sustainable forms of tourism that take into considerations (im)mobility regimes and uneven mobility infrastructures. In the context of a post-pandemic tourism recovery, aspirations are high and so are uncertainties, fears and hopes. Referring to a climate resilient recovery, Foley *et al.* (2022) state that

the different approaches proposed so far have three elements in common: the inclusion of development needs, the empowerment of communities, and an overall holistic approach that, in PICs, would include nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation. In these circumstances, and in relation to Pacific Islands, Hutchison *et al.* (2021) specifically remark that one of the keys to restructure a post-pandemic mode of tourism is that Indigenous People's wellbeing is explicitly considered in the process of finding alternatives and, above all, that their voices are heard and integrated in future frameworks and practices about a real sustainable tourism. There are other perspectives that underline the need to resist "overtourism" as a symptom of oppressive capitalism by considering issues and principles of degrowth in tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Furthermore, following Sheller's thought (2018; 2021a), there couldn't be anything close to sustainable tourism without a serious consideration of what tourism should look like under conditions of greater mobility justice and alternative trajectories of development, especially in the context of the climate crisis and necessary adaptation in Pacific SIDS.

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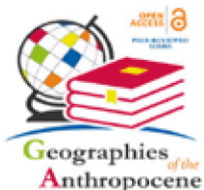
This book offers a comprehensive examination of the dynamic interplay between human mobility, migration, and tourism in the context of the Anthropocene era. The collection of eight chapters delves into various aspects of this complex relationship, shedding light on crucial issues, challenges, and opportunities in today's rapidly evolving global landscape. The concept of responsible tourism is a transversal element in this publication, exploring its significance in promoting sustainable practices and mitigating the environmental and socio-cultural impacts of movement of people. Another topic which is addressed here is the post-Covid regeneration of tourism-dependent island economies. The authors analyze the challenges faced by these regions and explore innovative approaches to sustainable recovery. The discussions here revolve around the importance of community engagement, diversification, and resilience in building a robust and sustainable tourism industry. Sustainability also takes a center stage in this edition. The discourse presented in various chapters examines the pressing environmental issues associated with the movement of people. It also delves into the transformation of the hotel industry and explores tourism opportunities in isolated geographical exclave, shedding light on unique destinations that face challenges related to accessibility and connectivity. Important analysis is also presented on cultural landscapes, heritage sites, and local traditions and how cultural authenticity and meaningful interactions between tourists and local communities can shape the tourist experience.

This book will be of great interest to scholars, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to understand and navigate the challenges and opportunities that arise in this rapidly changing global landscape.

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