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Polly Pattullo. *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1996. xiii + 220 pp. $19.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-85345-977-4.

Reviewed by Stuart McCook (The College of New Jersey)
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In the past three decades, tourism has transformed the Caribbean. Its appeal to local politicians and leaders was irresistible. Most Caribbean economies had traditionally depended on export agriculture. Revenue from export agriculture began to decline sharply after the depression of the 1930s. Attempts at industrialization in the 1940s and 1950s created some jobs, but not enough to accommodate either the loss of jobs in the agricultural sector or the increase in population. The rise of mass tourism in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s held the promise of jobs, development, and income. Most countries in the Caribbean have come to rely heavily on tourism. As former prime minister of Jamaica Michael Manley cautions in the preface, however, Caribbeans need to "avoid the twin dangers of unthinking triumphalism on the part of the industry's advocates and uncritical acceptance by governments and the general public." *Last Resorts* is a critical look at the benefits and the costs of tourism in the Caribbean.

Polly Pattullo, a London-based journalist, skillfully weaves together the book from travelogues, official and business surveys, academic journals, local newspapers, interviews, poetry, and song. The tourism industry in the Caribbean has undergone significant transformations in the past decade, and *Last Resorts* seeks to update older literature on tourism and to synthesize some of the more recent specialized studies on the tourist industry. The book's nine chapters give a detailed picture of the central issues and problems in the contemporary tourism industry: planning, employment, social impact, the environment and ecotourism, the tourists, the cruise-ship industry, and culture and identity.

The impact of mass tourism on the Caribbean has been impressive. Pattullo offers statistics to show this impact. Some examples: 13.7 million stayover tourists visited the region in 1994, a six-fold increase since 1970; tourist visits to the Dominican Republic rose from 63,000 in 1970 to almost two million in 1994. Most Caribbean islands saw similar increases in visits. This had a huge economic impact: in some countries "tourism accounts for up to 70 per cent of national income" (p. 12). The foreign exchange earned by tourism allows some countries to avoid significant deficits. In 1992, tourism replaced the agricultural sector as the leading source of income in six countries: Antigua, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts-Nevis, and the Dominican Republic.

The central question in the book is "who benefits from this growth?"–the transnational tour companies, airlines, and hotel chains? the local governments? or the Caribbean workers in the industry? The tourist industry, like the agricultural export industries that preceded it, has remained largely under foreign control. Airlines, tour operators, and hoteliers are the key players in the tourism industry, since they are the most important factors in deciding where tourists will go. And most of these organizations are controlled by people and organizations outside the region. Airlines decide the routes, schedules and prices; tour operators have the power to direct trade or withdraw it; and international hotel corporations own 63 percent of the rooms in the Caribbean. Most local organizations are too small or lack the capital and infrastructure to compete with the internationals. During the 1980s, regional governments got into the hotel sector. Management problems and IMF requirements, among other things, forced governments to privatize most of publicly owned hotels in the early 1990s.

Although much of the tourism industry is controlled by overseas corporations,"the public sector of the Caribbean dances attendance on its audiences for fear that the reviews will be poor and the entrepreneurs–airlines, tour operators, hotel chains, cruise lines–will next year take the show elsewhere" (p. 28). Caribbean states are responsible for, among other things, keeping the peace, providing a modern infrastructure (such as roads, airports, and water supplies), enticing investors through tax concessions, and undertaking long-term planning. If any of these are found wanting, the tourists

simply go to another island. The twin specters of AIDS and civil unrest destroyed Haiti's tourist industry in the mid-1980s.

Two important measures of the economic effects of the tourist industry are "leakage" and "linkage." Leakage is the proportion of import expenditures to export earnings. Many Caribbean nations import goods and services to sustain the tourist industry: the average leakage for the region is 70 percent. In some cases, such as the Bahamas, leakage is as high as 90 percent. Countries that can provide more of the goods and services locally have a much lower leakage rate: Jamaica's leakage in 1994 was 37 percent. "Linkage" refers to "the ways in which the tourist industry utilizes locally produced goods and services rather than importing them" (p. 39). More could be done to stimulate linkages in the tourist economy, particularly with the agricultural sector. In resorts and on cruise ships, tourists are more likely to eat tropical fruit imported from other parts of the world than that produced locally. Local agriculture, long geared to the export market, has had difficulty shifting to meet the tastes of the tourist industry. "In fundamental terms, the Caribbean produces what it does not eat, and eats what it does not produce" (p. 41). Nonetheless, recent efforts in Jamaica and Grenada suggest that it is possible to strengthen the linkages between the agricultural economy and the tourist industry.

The tourism industry has been so popular with Caribbean governments because it provides jobs. Pattullo cites the case of Aruba, where "the pursuit of tourism brought unemployment down from 40 per cent in 1985 to virtually zero a decade later" (p. 52). More than any other region in the world, workers in the Caribbean depend on tourism. The benefits of this employment, however, are mixed. Work is seasonal, wages are often low, and there is little security. Nonetheless, locals prize work in the tourist industry because it often provides better conditions than other industries. Tourism also provides indirect employment, which depends heavily on how effectively tourism is linked with other sectors of the economy. Taxi drivers, owners of guest houses, vendors, and other locals profit from the industry. Tensions abound, and the folk-memory of slavery is not far below the surface. Caribbean writers and scholars such as V. S. Naipaul, Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, and Hilary Beckles draw comparisons between the tourist industry and slavery. Naipaul wrote: "Every poor country accepts tourism as an unavoidable degradation. None of these has gone so far as some of these West Indian islands which, in the name of tourism, have sold themselves into a new slavery" (p. 65).

All of this has had a sharp impact on Caribbean societies. Borrowing her chapter title from a popular 1994 calypso song, "Like an alien, we own the land," Pattullo describes how many citizens feel excluded from their own country. The new "all-inclusive" resorts in Jamaica, St. Lucia, and other islands, often act as little fiefdoms. In 1994, the prime minister of Antigua was refused entrance to the Club Antigua resort because he did not have a pass. The social impact of tourism reaches deep into society. In an attempt to "safeguard" tourism, tourism officials have begun using private security guards and police to patrol the beaches. Locals wind up having restricted access to their own beaches. Some Caribbean intellectuals argue that tourism has a demonstration effect, "in which tourism is said to create a demand for Western lifestyles and attitudes" (p. 84). Some blame tourism for the erosion of traditional family and community relations. Sex tourism is increasingly common, particularly in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. It exploits locals both economically and racially. The Caribbean tourist trade also provides an infrastructure for drug trafficking and for laundering drug money. Casinos, also associated with organized crime, are commonplace. Some of the figures are astounding: "In the 1980s, while the Bahamas was at its most drug-dominated, Interpol rated it as the tenth most crime-ridden country in the world, the second for rape and the sixth for murder" (p. 98). Emphasis on the tourist industry has often led to the neglect of domestic problems and needs, and turned many people into second-class citizens in their own countries.

The physical environment has also suffered from the rapid, uncontrolled growth of the tourist industry. Pattullo makes a pointed contrast between Columbus's descriptions of the natural marvels of the islands he encountered with that of a modern-day writer who found her favorite cove "full of sun-tanned bodies and ringed by boats, from swan yachts to rubber Zodiacs, and there were bottles and plastic debris on the sea-bed and picnic litter on the sand for the rich are as disgusting as the poor in their carelessness of the natural world" (p. 104). Tourists have come to expect white beaches, palm trees, and sunsets. These expectations have redefined the physical landscape of the Caribbean, as developers clear the coastlines around beaches, build piers and airports, and destroy other fragile environments. Fragile coral reefs and mangrove swamps are being damaged irreparably. Few Caribbean nations have the administrative or planning ability either to assess or to control this process. Ecotourism offers some hope that concrete efforts at conservation will be made. Belize, Dominica, and Guyana claim that ecotourism defines the shape and strategy of

their tourist industry, and ecotourism is also important in other places. Paradoxically, however, the very popularity of ecotourism often increases environmental pressure on fragile sites. "Ecotourism," argues Pattullo, "needs to remain the centerpiece of the regions enchantment. Firstly, it must do so to provide a sustainable future for its people, and secondly it must do so to fulfil the fantasies of those millions of people who, on leaving their plane, take their first sniff of that still sweet Caribbean air" (p. 132).

Partly in response to the problems of the Caribbean islands, the cruise industry has taken off over the past few years. The ships take tourists from island to island, where they make brief tours onto the land, going to duty-free shops, souvenir shops, casinos. Almost one million passengers took cruises in 1983: ten years later the number was well over two million. Two cruise lines have ordered ships so big that they cannot fit in the Panama Canal. The cruise industry has its problems though: when the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) announced that it would standardize its departure taxes, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines dropped St. Lucia (one of the seven OECS members) from its itinerary. Cruise lines also employ a comparatively small number of Caribbean nationals, and most of those in lower-level jobs. Cruise lines have even gone a step further by either buying or leasing their own island, where they avoid docking fees and head taxes. The stores and bars on board ship compete with the stores on land. Again, Pattullo asks the central question: "who benefits from the government's expenditure on port and shipping facilities and such expenses as extra police security" (p. 167)? Most of the cruise ship disembarkation points are largely controlled by transnational chains, local elites, or established expatriates. Local small businesses have suffered.

Tourism has also affected the Caribbean culture. One Antiguan senator wrote that "folk culture has become a marketable commodity, readily and monotonously packaged as Yellow Bird, limbo without meaning, except as tourist entertainment, steelbands which now draw no response from the people for whom the music is produced, and a national dish which is really Kentucky and Fries. A culture has been turned on its head" (p. 182). And yet, Pattullo argues that there is at least some room for folk culture to continue to flourish. Many Carnivals, such as Trinidad's, have long histories and traditions. In spite of corporate sponsorship, television rights, and marketing schemes, Trinidad's Carnival remains essentially Trinidadian. In contrast, the Bahamian Junkanoo has depended much more heavily on tourists for its survival. Countries have also sought to increase "cultural" or "heritage" tourism. For example, Jamaica has created a Heritage Park at St. Ann's Bay, which was once an Arawak village, later the Spanish capital of Jamaica, and later still a sugar plantation. Cultural tourism also has its critics, since historical parks often emphasize European heritage and slight the African heritage. Bonaire has restored some slave huts from the nineteenth century, but such attention to vernacular architecture is still uncommon.

Last Resorts closes with a look to the future. Pattullo cites the work of Hilary Beckles, of the University of the West Indies, who argues that tourism as it is organized at the present cannot be a tool for sustainable development. Other groups–environmentalists, church groups, intellectuals, and artists–have strongly criticized the effects of tourism. "The conclusion reached by many specialists is that high-density mass tourism and the open economies and closed ecosystems of small islands are not compatible with sustainable development" (p. 204). There is, argues Pattullo, an alternative to the "mass market, leaking vessel approach," which is an "integrated tourism in which the industry is managed for the common good, focussing on ecological and human needs as well as business considerations" (p. 204). The most compelling example of the potential of "integrated" tourism was Granada under the leadership of Maurice Bishop and the PRG in the early 1980s. With Bishop's overthrow and murder in 1983, however, tourist development in Grenada returned to the common pattern. More recent efforts at "community tourism" in Jamaica have proved quite successful. Local committees have involved people at all levels in planning and development, shifting the focus of tourism away from big resorts to the villages. Although still small, they are attractive alternatives to packaged mass tourism. The Caribbean would also benefit from stronger regional integration and coordination, which would put it in a better negotiating position. The formation of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) in 1993 is a step in the right direction, although it still has no mandate to enforce its plans (p. 209).

Pattullo's hope that sustainable, integrated tourism will become the new paradigm for tourism in the Caribbean is unlikely to be fulfilled. For each critical problem resulting from the tourism industry, Pattullo has found evidence of creative and constructive solutions to it. And yet these solutions are almost invariably weaker and more limited than the forces they confront. And as Pattullo has so persuasively argued, many of the islands are running out of time and out of space. Many fragile ecosystems have been irretrievably damaged, many beach fronts completely built up. For the islands with larger, more diverse economies–Trinidad, Cuba, Jamaica,

and the Dominican Republic–there is still room to maneuver. For the smaller islands–Barbados, Martinique, Dominica, and the rest–time is short and the alternatives are few. It is hard to see how these microstates can confront powerful external pressures and radically reorganize the structure of their tourist industries.

The arguments presented in *Last Resorts* go a long way to bringing Franklin Knight's *The Caribbean: Genesis of a Fragmented Nation* up to the present. Six years ago, Knight wrote that "the old order has changed, but what is new is not yet clear" (p. 330). Patullo has given us a vivid and detailed portrait of a central feature in the Caribbean's new order. She would agree with Knight, however, who concludes that "imported panaceas have merely produced false promises. Maybe the time has come to seek out bold local solutions for local problems" (p. 330). Doing so will be a struggle.

Reference:

Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nation.* 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

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