



Sports Economics, Management and Policy

Series Editor: Dennis Coates

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Sport Tourism, Island Territories and Sustainable Development

A Comparative Perspective

 Springer

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The aim of this series is to provide academics, students, sports business executives, and policy makers with information and analysis on the cutting edge of sports economics, sport management, and public policy on sporting issues.

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Editors

Sport Tourism, Island Territories and Sustainable Development

A Comparative Perspective

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Foreword

Established in 2010, the International Research Network in Sport Tourism (IRNIST) has sought to study sustainable local development through sport tourism. Although the genesis of the establishment of the research network was to promote rigorous academic studies involving professionals from numerous universities across the world, it soon became apparent that the concept of sport tourism was poorly understood, with the conceptual boundaries not well circumscribed. This lack of clarity was due largely to a multitude of working definitions of sport tourism.

Acknowledging this lack of conceptual coherence in defining sport tourism (JS&T, 2014; Gammon et al., 2017), international scholars have sought for decades to better understand this dynamic construct as more than the sum of its parts (Downward, 2005; Pigeassou et al., 2003; Weed & Bull, 2012). Since its establishment, IRNIST scholars have attempted to develop a more empirically grounded and inclusive definition of sport tourism (Sobry et al., 2016; Van Rheenen et al., 2017; Melo et al., 2021). Van Rheenen et al. (2017), for example, conducted a systematic content analysis of published definitions between 1993 and 2014 ($n = 517$), narrowing these texts to 30 distinct definitions of sport tourism. Among these 30 definitions, these researchers found five paradigmatic dimensions underlying this dynamic construct: (i) time (the duration away from a home environment), (ii) space (encompassing travel away from a home environment), (iii) sport as motivation for travel (type, level, and extent of sport practice or activity), (iv) participant experience of the sport tourism activity, and (v) economic motivation (reference to the development of an economic supply or niche market).

Since then, IRNIST scholars have emphasized the need to develop a deeper understanding of the field's supply or production (Sobry et al., 2016; Bouchet & Bouhaouala, 2009; Bouchet & Sobry, 2019; Bouhaouala, 2018), the least cited paradigm in previous definitions (Van Rheenen et al., 2017). Sobry et al. (2016) refer to this supply as "opportunity sport tourism," akin to Gammon and Robinson's (2003) earlier reference to "tourism sport." As a modern addendum, Sobry et al. proposed a socioeconomic index system to more accurately measure this highly diversified and growing sport tourism economic market that ranges from mega-events to small-scale producers of activities that represent tertiary excursions for travelers.

Additionally, scholars have sought to understand sport tourism *relationally*, recognizing the systems or matrices of power that inform these socio-historical activities (Saavedra, 2018; Sykes, 2017; Van Rheenen & Roberson, 2023). One might argue that a focus on the social and historical relations inherent to the logic of sport tourism production and consumption is nothing more than another way of describing participant experience; Van Rheenen and Roberson (2023) contend, however, that structures of dominance or matrices of power (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, etc.) inform and differentially impact the sport tourism experience. They must therefore be made visible, revealed, and studied from a particular theoretical framework.

Finally, both of these conceptual developments have prompted recent work on sport tourism and sustainable development more broadly understood (Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022; Melo et al., 2021; Naria et al., 2022). During the twenty-first century, then, environmental sustainability has become one of the most commonly discussed dimensions in terms of sport tourism impact (Carneiro et al., 2016; Van Rheenen & Melo, 2021) but not a particularly well-researched dimension of sustainability (Gibson et al., 2012; Hinch et al., 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2021). Even in relatively small-scale sport tourism activities and events, potential negative environmental impacts may occur as a by-product of these activities, such as noise, water and air pollution, soil erosion, natural landscape destruction, fauna and flora destruction, and the deterioration of monuments and historic sites (Markwick, 2000; Melo & Gomes, 2016; Orams, 2005; Van Rheenen & Melo, 2021).

The concept of sustainability has also evolved significantly since the end of the twentieth century. While the three pillars of the triple-bottom-line articulated in *Our Common Future*, otherwise known as the Brundtland Report¹ (UNCED, 1987; Dwyer, 2015; Elkington, 1997), provided the initial conceptual framework for scholars interested in the intersection of sport tourism and sustainable development. But the economic, social, and environmental factors underlying sustainability were so broad as to limit the application of this conceptualization. Changes in the global socio-political context have led the United Nations (UN) to weigh in more recently on the issue of sustainable development, further expanding our understanding of the concept to include 17 distinct Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Carlsen & Bruggemann, 2022; Chirico, 2018; United Nations, 2015, 2021). These SDGs map loosely onto the three overarching pillars referenced in the Brundtland Report almost a half century ago (Mangukiya & Sklarew, 2023; Rockström & Sukhdev, 2016; Sachs et al., 2022).

The 17 SDG's include decent work and economic growth, sustainable cities and communities, climate action, and gender equality, among others. The World Tourism Organisation, a specialized agency of the United Nations, has also committed itself to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing in particular Goals 8, 12, and 14. These SDGs target inclusive and sustainable economic growth,

¹Norway's first female Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland was Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) from 1998 to 2003. She also chaired the Brundtland Commission which presented the Report on Sustainable Development, entitled *Our Common Future*, in 1987. It has come to be referred to as the *Brundtland Report*.

sustainable consumption and production (SCP), and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources (UNWTO, 2023).

In a document entitled “The Contribution of Sport to the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 Development Agenda,” the International Olympic Committee (IOC) “recognizes that this Agenda is an historical opportunity to ensure that sport and physical activity are integrated as a meaningful and cost-effective tool to achieve these sustainable development goals” (IOC, 2015, p. 2). In this document, the IOC promotes 6 of the 17 SDG’s in particular as important to sport’s potential for positive global change. These include promoting health and well-being (SDG # 3), achieving quality education (SDG # 4), promoting gender equality (SDG # 5), promoting sustainable cities and communities (SDG # 11), contributing to peaceful and just societies (SDG # 16), and finally, developing critical partnerships for the realization of these sustainable development goals globally (SDG # 17).



UNWTO (2023)

Many of these goals will be referenced in the following comparative research project examining the development of small island states or territories through sport tourism. Specifically, the conceptual model and comparative research methodology proposed in this book explicitly address these sustainable development goals. It would be naive to assume that sport tourism offers a panacea for the sustainable development of small island territories. Rather, this project begins with the premise that this economic and social activity could play a unique role in the development of certain small island economies as they make intentional efforts to foster sustainable growth, protect and preserve natural resources, and honor the dignity of indigenous peoples. In analyzing several island case studies, the following comparative

research project hopes to articulate a potential model or heuristic that might be adopted by other like territories and adapted to their own local contexts. These contexts must assess the varying levels of vulnerability, adaptability or adaptive capacity and myriad types of public-private and core-peripheral partnerships that could successfully be forged to accelerate small island development through sport tourism. This significant contribution to the literature offers an opportunity for local to global (e.g., glocal) stakeholders to reimagine sustainable development through a more just and intentional ethic of care for the health and biodiversity of the environment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: A Journey to the Promised Land



Derek Van Rheenen, Olivier Naria, Ricardo Melo, and Claude Sobry

Sometimes I wake up not knowing where I am. The world is full of islands, said Cruso once. His words ring truer every day.

Foe, p. 65 (Coetzee, 1986)

The idea for this book was born from a chance encounter between IRNIST founder and President, Dr. Claude Sobry, and Dr. Olivier Naria, a scholar from La Réunion Island, a French territory in the Indian Ocean. This scholar from the Indian Ocean reached out to Sobry in his capacity as the director of the International Research Network on Sport Tourism (IRNIST) and Professor Emeritus of Economics at the Université of Lille (France). Dr. Olivier Naria, geographer and Associate Professor of Management at the Université de La Réunion (France), asked Sobry what might seem like a relatively simple question, practically speaking: *how can sport tourism contribute to the sustainable development of the islands of the Indian Ocean?*

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Naria's question coincided with the completion of a comparative research project sponsored by IRNIST, a project that analyzed nine half marathon events across three continents and nine countries (Melo et al., 2021). It quickly became apparent through this initial conversation (and the extant literature) that the impact of sport tourism on the islands of the Indian Ocean had been limited to date. Not surprisingly, there was very little scholarship on the subject. The idea of a research collaboration blossomed, whereby island scholars from around the world might weigh in on this topic, merging relevant research with practical application.

Sobry, Van Rheenen, and Melo thought that this proposed project might utilize the comparative methodology they had recently introduced and adopted for their road races project (Van Rheenen et al., 2021). This comparative methodology sought to illuminate conceptual and concrete ways (e.g., best practices) of implementing sport tourism activities and events that intentionally fostered sustainable development principles and practices. While the methodology of the book compared nine half marathon events organized across the globe, the proposed project would seek to reverse the logic and shift the comparative unit of analysis.

The comparative unit of analysis would no longer be the *sport tourism activity or event*, but rather, a *similar site or territory*. The context or site of study would be small island territories, analyzing the different ways in which various sporting activities or events were being offered (or proposed to be offered) as niche and/or diversified markets from a sustainable perspective, with specific sustainability goals incorporated into the design and implementation of such development. By focusing on a geographical or spatial unit of analysis from this theoretical framework, IRNIST determined to contrast similar or like territories and their unique relationships to sport tourism and sustainable development. We anticipated significant variation across both territorial site and time, even within the same oceans, seas, and archipelagos.

Guiding Hypotheses

Just as we specified to potential authors the guidelines for empirical data collection and analysis, this international research project posited three critical hypotheses at its inception:

H1—Sport tourism has the potential to support the sustainable development of small island territories (e.g., *ecoterritories*). This development can be measured at multiple levels, inclusive of the intersecting political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. More specifically, scholars are able to measure the unique sustainable development goals (SDGs), as articulated by multiple organizations and movements, such as the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement (Stracqualursi & Liptsk, 2021), the Somoa Pathways (Montes, 2016); the U.N.'s Global Sustainability Platform (<https://www.thegpsc.org/>) and 2020 Agenda (Weiland et al., 2021), the 2022 United Nation's global climate summit (Colman & Mathiesen, 2022; Plumer et al., 2022), and the 2022 Kunming-Montreal global

biodiversity framework (Paddison, 2022). That is, sport tourism practices intersect the fundamental dimensions of sustainable development, whether locally, nationally, or globally (Bouchet & Sobry, 2019; Naria et al., 2022; Van Rheenen et al., 2021). Scholars have likewise developed sustainable development indices by nation state, assessing a unique score for each of the 17 SDGs and an overall aggregate score for each geographic location (Sachs et al., 2022).

- At the political level (e.g., governance), sport tourism serves as a lever for the development of stakeholder inclusion and relational accountability, providing a novel framework for land use planning and a guide for the preservation and management of natural resources. The political dimension draws on an island's historical context, such as the multiple impacts of colonialization and its aftermath. This historical context likewise impacts the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of island development and the possibility for, and realization of, local to global sustainability development goals.
- At the economic level, sport tourism has the potential to be a robust entrepreneurial sector, with the opportunity for significant growth as an expanding market. On many islands, this tourism market is often seasonal depending on the specific territory and the given activities or events promoted. As an economic sector, sport tourism on island territories fosters employment growth, innovation, financing and the creation of new businesses and services activities. This economic development enhances island revenue, as well as economic stability and independence. Ideally, this innovation can also reduce inequalities by promoting a circular rather than linear economy.
- At the social level, sport tourism has the potential to foster meaningful relationships between peoples, honor local customs and intergenerational communities, including indigenous island peoples. This can be achieved by promoting relational equity, fairness, and social justice, while making a commitment to equal access to opportunities; sport tourism activities and events help to create civic pride and place recognition. Ideally, the sustainable development connected to sport tourism can help reduce poverty, food insecurity, clean water, and enhanced health care.
- At the environmental level, sport tourism has the potential to foster meaningful relationships between peoples and their environment, from the local to the global. This requires a commitment to protecting and preserving natural resources on land and below water, while seeking to reduce our reliance on a linear rather than circular economy. A focus on responsible consumption and production, as well as climate action undergirds these environmental efforts. This commitment has become a call to action for the world, addressing the multiple ways in which human beings have placed a premium on profits and not on our planet.

H2—A comparative approach to ethical and just local development through sport tourism must address the articulated sustainable development goals as critical to the successful adoption of a viable model for planetary health and well-being. Recent global agreements, such as the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity

framework, suggest that the time is now to act locally in preservation of the planet to avoid what has been characterized as the sixth mass extinction, in which three-quarters of Earth's species could vanish within the next 300 years (Barnosky et al., 2011; Naggs, 2017). Global warming and its deleterious impact have only increased, as the last 8 years have been the hottest on record (Fountain & Rojanasakul, 2023).

H3—A study focusing on the development of sport tourism across several islands within numerous seas and oceans make it possible to better understand the phenomena and model for successful planning and implementation (e.g., the articulation of best practices and policies). We anticipate that such empirical and comparative analyses will foster greater communication and collaboration between key stakeholders, such as the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), NGOs, scholars/scientists, practitioners, and local communities impacted but all too often excluded from the decision-making and governance process. The primary goal of these collaborations, then, should be to promote sustainable development while including local and indigenous communities into these sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Objectives of the Book

With this book, we have sought to realize three objectives. Drawing on the work of our esteemed colleagues in the field since its academic inception, we seek to view sport tourism from an international, inclusive, and interdisciplinary perspective. This approach acknowledges that the field of sport tourism represents a diverse collection of social practices experienced within a fixed continuum of time and space. Sport tourism activities and events exist within a unique logic of production and consumption, socially and historically constructed by peoples in relation to one another and to a given context.

As such, this international, comparative study has fostered a greater understanding of how sport tourism can contribute to sustainable development. In this instance, we explore the sustainable development of small islands, research that has not been undertaken previously at this global scale. The fulfilment of this second objective has led to comparative findings which will assist key stakeholders and decision-makers to more responsibly develop island territories in a collaborative effort to realize specific sustainable development goals. A total of 21 research teams across multiple seas, oceans, and island archipelagos have taken part in this comparative research project.

The third and final objective of this book has been the refinement of a comparative methodology at the intersection of sport tourism and sustainable development. This refined methodology has sought to collect and analyze empirical data across numerous geographical sites worldwide. In comparison to an earlier international

project (Melo et al., 2021; see also Naria et al., 2022), island territories became the unit of analysis rather than a specific sport tourism activity or event. This research paves the way for further studies to advance our knowledge of the role of sport tourism and its potential positive impact on local sustainable development. It is our hope that the results of this project will inspire future stakeholders to work together for a more just and sustainable future.

The Journey Begins: Outline of the Book

We begin this journey by constructing a conceptual framework to better refine a comparative methodology previously utilized by the International Research Network in Sport Tourism (IRNIST). Utilizing this conceptual framework, the book offers a global map, an aspirational canvas, of several small island states and their efforts at supporting sustainable development through a diverse array of sport tourism events and activities. This map is also a potential treasure trove to evaluate a set of best practices. We adopt a comparative approach, where place or site become the unit of analysis, a similar but diverse geography—small islands—with varying colonial histories, hybrid cultural identities, and emergent or emerging economies. The methodology measures the dynamic intersections of sport and development, with a specific focus on sport tourism and sustainable development. It seeks to do so through a critical eco-territorial lens, recognizing the possibility of global change and a commitment to ethical and sustained (and also restrained) growth. This conceptual and methodological articulation comprises Part I of the book.

The first chapter of this section more fully defines our unit of comparative analysis, small island states or territories, a common set of geographical, topographical, and socio-historical characteristics spread across multiple oceans and seas. It describes a common history of colonialism, followed by an often turbulent process of cultural and social (in)dependence that continues today through postcolonial policies of capital accumulation and development. Finally, this first chapter acknowledges a present reality and describes a foreseeable and aspirational future, one cognizant of global markets, the desire for economic growth and a corresponding mandate for genuine sustainable development. Such development requires a commitment to social and environmental justice, a moral and political call to action from the local to the global.

Professor Wilfrid Bertile pens Chapter 3, analyzing the intersection of the geomorphology of small tropical islands as an important aspect of island geography and their historical relationship to sport tourism. Adopting a global perspective, the author argues that landforms and morphological processes can be impacted by both natural factors and human actions. As such, island geomorphology has an impact on sport tourism (and tourism broadly), while sport tourism activities and infrastructures impact landforms and geomorphological processes.

Chapter 4 describes the historical relationship of tourism, and in particular sport tourism, with small island states or territories. It draws on existing literature over the past 50 years, describing a niche and diverse market that has evolved over time. This development has been quite uneven, based on island context, as has been the relative attention paid to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. There has been a revitalized focus on sport tourism in the twenty-first century and its potential scalability, recognizing the complimentary contribution of the sport tourism sector to the larger tourism industry. This revitalization has come at a time when there is a global call for sustainability, some of the loudest voices coming from small island stakeholders who have pointed out the inequalities in the global market and the corresponding negative environmental and social impacts on small island states.

Chapter 5 articulates the conceptual framework utilized in this international research project, analyzing small islands as eco-territories. We define eco-territories as unique geographic ecosystems with diverse political economies and socio-cultural histories. These varying island characteristics often structure the dynamic contour of a territory's developmental trajectory. At the intersection of small island eco-territories, sport tourism innovation, and sustainable development, the chapter calls for a moral mandate and the political will to adopt a critical consciousness or eco-pedagogy—a local to global commitment to social and environmental justice.

Finally, Chapter 6 describes the comparative research methodology utilized for this research project. By focusing on small island eco-territories, a geographical or spatial unit of analysis, this book has sought to contrast similar or like territories and their unique relationships to sport tourism and sustainable development. We anticipated significant variation across both territorial site and time, even within the same oceans, seas, and archipelagos.

Part II of the book offers 21 case studies, utilizing the research study's comparative methodology. This section is organized by sea and ocean, with distinct chapters devoted to each of these unique bodies of water. As the global map (Fig. 1.1) illustrates below, these island territories span the globe. We begin in the Mediterranean (including the Aegean) and North (including the Baltic) Seas, depicted as central to the map longitudinally. We then move west from Central Europe across the Atlantic Ocean, culminating this leg of the journey in the Caribbean Sea. We proceed across the vast Pacific Ocean, spanning nearly 20,000 km, ending our circumference of the world in the Indian Ocean archipelago. Along the journey, we seek a new world, a better world, envisioning a healthier and more sustainable planet.

Table 1.1 documents the geographic coordinates of all of these islands, noting their latitude and longitude. Latitudes and longitudes represent the metrics of the geographic coordinate system. Latitudes are horizontal lines that measure the distance north or south of the equator. Lines of longitude are vertical lines, also called meridians, that measure east or west from the prime meridian (0 degrees) in Greenwich, England. These geographic coordinates accompany the map above (see Fig. 1.1) so as to assist the reader in getting his or her bearings. Once within the islands and following the foundational chapters (Part I), this book can be read as an



Fig. 1.1 Map of small island case studies

Table 1.1 Island territories by country, size and geographical coordinates

Ocean or sea	Island and/or archipelago	Country	Size	Geographic coordinates
Mediterranean	<i>Sea</i>	*****	*****	*****
*****	Malta	Malta	316 533,286	35.9375 N, 14.3754 E
*****	Sardinia	Italy	24,090 1.639,500	40.1209 N, 9.0129 E
*****	Kalymos (Aegean Sea)	Greece	109 29,000	36.5924 N, 26.5906 E
North	<i>Sea</i>	*****	*****	*****
*****	Helgoland, Rügen (Baltic Sea)	Germany	926 77,000	54.3520 N, 13.3630 E
Atlantic Ocean	*****	*****	*****	*****
*****	Azores	Portugal	2333 243,862	38.305542 N, 30.38410 W
*****	Canary	Autonomous communities of Spain	7447 2.207 million	28.2916 N, 16.6291 W
*****	Madeira	Portugal	801 251,060	32.7607 N, 16.9595 W
Caribbean Sea	*****	*****	*****	*****
*****	Barbados	Barbados	430 288,255	13.1939 N, 59.5432 W
Pacific Ocean	*****	*****	Square km Population	Latitude, longitude
*****	Kiribati	Kiribati	811 121,388	1.8369 N, 157.3768 W
*****	Tahiti	French Polynesia island	1042 189.517	17.375999 S, 149.265999 W
*****	French Polynesia	France, Overseas country	4167 284,960	17.6797 S, 149.4068 W
*****	Irago, région du Chūbu partie centrale de l'île d'Honshū	Japan	72,572 127,368	34.6505 N, 136.9867 E
*****	Singapore	Singapore	719 5.64 million	1.3521 N, 103.8198 E
Indian Ocean	*****	*****	*****	*****
*****	Reunion	France, Overseas country	2512 911,682	21.1151 S, 55.5364 E
*****	Mauritius	Mauritius	1865 1.266 million	20.3484 S, 57.5522 E
*****	Madagascar	Madagascar	587,041 29,472,911	18.7669 S, 46.8691 E
*****	Mayotte	France, Overseas country	374 289,290	12.8275 S, 45.1662 E
*****	Rodrigues	Autonomous region of Mauritius	108 43,650	19.7245 S, 63.4272 E

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

Ocean or sea	Island and/or archipelago	Country	Size	Geographic coordinates
*****	Union des Comoros	France, Overseas country	1862 844,410	11.39713 S, 43.222135 E
*****	Maldives	Republic of Maldives	298 415,592	3.2028 N, 73.2207 E
*****	Zanzibar	Tanzanian archipelago	2461 800,010	6.1357 S, 39.3621 E

open text (Eco, 1989¹), beginning where you would first like to travel and proceeding in the direction that most piques your curiosity. The book is also open in promoting a freedom of movement by exploring a critical study of eco-territories. This critical exploration analyzes the present while envisioning an aspirational future, one that, together, we may realize.

Part III offers even larger comparative analyses, drawing from the case studies presented in Part II. Olivier Naria et al. provide a comparative and regional analysis of the primary islands in the Indian Ocean, recognizing both similarities and differences at the intersection of sport tourism and sustainable development across this diverse archipelago. These authors analyze a variety of initiatives utilized by stakeholders seeking economic growth and global visibility in this group of islands, focusing in particular on future prospects for sport tourism and sustainable development within these diverse territories. The articulation of these social practices and their socio-cultural and environmental implications showcase to other like destinations how best to develop more sustainable sport tourism activities in accordance with the United Nation’s SDGs. The model presented here, based on the book’s comparative methodology, offers a conceptual and ethical framework when analyzing the promotion of sport tourism activities or events in these particular eco-territories.

The next chapter of our comparative analyses of islands as eco-territories highlights a first-of-its-kind global study encompassing three vast oceans, numerous seas, and both large and small archipelagos located within these waters. These geographical locations or sites include a wide variety of island types to this international research project. The conclusion of this comparative research project promises the articulation of best practices to consider for future planning and implementation from the local to regional to global perspective. Finally, the culminating

¹ The idea of an “open text” (Eco, 1989) has been the subject of considerable interest within literary criticism since the middle of the twentieth century. Of note here is Julio Cortazar’s revolutionary publication of *La Rayuela* (1963, translated into English as *Hopscotch* in 1963), in which he encourages the reader to participate in the production of the novel. Cortazar suggests two possible ways of reading the book. The first is to read in the normal and linear fashion, or what he refers to as the “passive” approach. The second way of reading the novel takes control of the novel’s proposed order by reading chapters in alternative sequence. An open text might also be regarded as critical and liberatory, seeking a hopeful, utopian future.

chapter provides several key snapshots from this comprehensive exploration, mapping the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of small island states, sport tourism activities and events, and sustainable development. Lessons learned from this international research project will inform future directions, contributing to the existing literature. We hope that the proposed conceptual model and revised comparative methodology will help both scholars and practitioners working at this dynamic intersection. We also hope that this international project contributes to the literature as a valuable resource guide based on the multiple characteristics articulated within these diverse case studies.

Following these comparative analyses, Giovanni Di Cola provides the reader a global perspective, highlighting the critical role of large, international organizations, such as the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This chapter outlines the recent international discourse on climate change resilience and the promotion of both blue and green economies among Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This discourse includes innovative global developments such as the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), which positions Small Island Developing States (SIDS) at the forefront of local to global sustainable development efforts. This book, and the collective work of IRNIST, hopes to contribute to these global conversations at this critical intersection. With the publication of this volume, we will present our findings and recommendations at the United Nations' 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be held in May 2024 in the sovereign island country of Antigua and Barbuda in the West Indies (at the conjuncture of the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean).

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Part I
Conceptual and Methodological
Frameworks: A Comparison of Place from
an Eco-territorial Perspective

Chapter 2

Small Island States or Territories



Derek Van Rheenen, Olivier Naria, Ricardo Melo, and Claude Sobry

*I am a rock.
I am an island.
And a rock feels no pain
And an island never cries.*

Paul Simon (1965)

From a western, post-colonial perspective, islands evoke an exotic destination, an escape to tropical paradise (Bernardie-Tahir, 2011)—a respite from the cold, rational world of modernity, where pale, rheumatoid fingers poke and prod us to produce and consume, evermore. These islands are home to their own peoples with distinct cultural identities, indigenous social histories, and their unique development is often lost on the visiting tourist, a traveling interloper spending their well-earned time and money to relax. These tourists work to consume; they sense they have earned and therefore deserve the needed rest and relaxation, worn and frayed from their daily labors and productive lives. And so, as tourists do, they come to the

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islands, spend time and money, and then go home. They engage in this modern practice of tourism, whether rested or not, and whether respectful of the place and the nature they have just visited.

Like traveling to an island, enjoying sun, sand, and sea, (3S's) often objectifies the environment as a resource to be used or experienced for personal gain rather than being with, and as a part of, nature. As Warden (2019) challenges, "how can you visit something of which you are a part?" (9). By reframing travel as relational and respectful, can we become one with others and with nature? These are important guiding questions as we conceive of sustainable development through sport tourism *in relation to* small island territories and their local peoples.

Islands also conjure a primordial fear of human survival, a lonely, sometimes singular fight to overcome nature, both physical and human. The popular Simon and Garfunkel 1960s song entitled "I am a Rock" begins with the initial stanza

A winter's day
 In a deep and dark December
 I am alone
 Gazing from my window to the street below
 On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow

The song ends with the following lines:

I am a rock
 I am an island
 And a rock feels no pain
 And an island never cries.

This haunting song captures the numbing and poetic sound of silence, of loneliness, a fearful soul self-sequestered from the world in order to avoid feeling, in order to avoid feeling pain. It is a song of a man lost in his own isolation, metaphorically lost at sea.

Western literature is filled with fictional tales of individuals lost at sea only to navigate the wilds of an inclement rock surrounded by breaking waves. These narratives of self-preservation and potential salvation unearth humankind's quest to understand who he is and who he is meant to be. These stories are parables of possibility and limitation. The shipwrecked, once on the island, seeks elaborate ways to get off of the island, an existential quest to return from "savagery" to "civilization," with all of its comforts and trappings. But since that may never come to pass (Robinson Crusoe was shipwrecked on *his* island for over 28 years before freeing himself), the island survivalist must create their own sustainable ecosystem—food, water, shelter, security, even amusement, and methods to confront isolation and loneliness.

Island tourists are the antithesis of these shipwrecked survivalists. They come of their own volition, stay as long as they want, and do whatever they want while on the island destination. These travelers can also leave whenever they want. They want for little, provided a safe harbor and an all-inclusive smorgasbord of food, drink, and orchestrated activities. In general, they arrive and depart in comfort, by cruise ship or by air, a far cry from the image of the wretched soul crawling through the crashing waves to land, a half-clothed body strewn upon a splash of sand.

Islands are also unique topographies, physical and social geographies that witness coming storms well before the mainland. So too is the case with climate change and dislocation, erosion and cultural eradication, and small island states or territories sending the signal to other places housed in urban fortresses that all is not well with the planet. Seas are rising with global warming, storms are more severe than ever, and the weather forecast for the future is bleak. Some small islands risk survival of their own in this deteriorating climate (Duvat & Magnan, 2012), prompting the urgent need for global change and a concerted commitment to sustainability.

Island Typology: Defining Small Island States or Ecoterritories

This research project focuses on a comparison of a similar unit of analysis, small island states or ecoterritories, and unique geographic ecosystems with diverse political economies and sociocultural histories. Travelers, geographers, explorers, and historiographers have sought to define this distinct “piece of land surrounded by water” (OED, 1989). Small island states have been defined within a larger island typology, differentiated from rocks (Charney, 1999; Schofield, 2009), reef islands and atolls (Dobbs, 2005; McNeill, 1954; Watts, 2019), island dependencies, state islands, and island countries (Armstrong & Read, 2003; Baldacchino, 2007, 2020; Baldacchino & Dehoorne, 2014; Bernardie-Tahir & Taglioni, 2005; Petzold & Magnan, 2019; Taglioni, 2003). State islands, such as Hawaii (USA), the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), Corsica and Belle (France), Okinawa (Japan), and Lakshadweep and Diu (India), to name a few, are often excluded from global and comparative island data due to the paucity of accurate tourism information, such as number of visits, length of stay, and contributions to Gross National Product (GNP). This data is incomplete primarily because of a lack of border controls within their larger nation-states. Island countries, such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Iceland, Singapore, and Japan, among others, may be centered on one or two main islands, while others spread across hundreds or thousands of smaller islands, such as Indonesia, the Bahamas, and the Seychelles (Weaver, 2017).

Small islands exist in both warm and cold water contexts and span the earth as evident when one turns a globe. Weaver (2017: 11) acknowledges that “‘small island’ status is a subjective designation that compromises between population and area.” Relative to area, Nunn (1987) has defined a small island as an island of less than 10,000 square kilometers. Similarly, as Bertile asserts in the next chapter of this book, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are recognized by international organizations as “lands surrounded by water on all sides in a single block, with a surface area of less than 11,000 km² and a population of less than 1.5 million inhabitants. Bertile focuses even more specifically on “small tropical island territories” and their geomorphic relationship to sport tourism historically. The author differentiates between high and low islands, whereby the former are generally volcanic and the latter almost exclusively formed from limestone.

Altitude affects temperatures and rainfall. High islands tend to be lower in temperature, which increases precipitation. In fact, high mountainous tropical islands receive the most rainfall than anywhere else in the world. For example, La Réunion island receives 7.5 billion m³ of rainfall annually, 3.5 times the amount France receives per year (Météo France, 2023). Conversely, the low or flat islands have very modest altitudes, as their limestone foundations are comprised of thick coral sediment.

Finally, as Bertile notes, the relative level of tourism within the economies of these island territories creates its own typology, based on percentage of GDP. Some islands are highly dependent on tourism, such as the Seychelles, the Maldives, Madeira, and the Canary Islands, with 25–35% of their GDP based on tourism. Additionally, based on the distinctions between high and low islands described above, some islands specialize on beach tourism because they are coral or low-lying, respectively, such as the Maldives and Mauritius. Conversely, other islands have a greater variety of landforms, providing the physical spaces for a diversity of sport tourism activities and events, such as Hawaii, La Réunion, and the Seychelles. Nearly all of these islands have significant potential for increased and diversified sport tourism development. They also have an opportunity for the promotion of genuine sustainable development, whether as “blue tourism,” connected to the sea and coastline, or “green tourism,” connected to sport tourism activities experienced in the interior of the islands.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) includes in its definition of small island states a composite of island designations (e.g., Guadeloupe), island countries (e.g., Iceland), and the singular city and island nation of Singapore. The UNWTO collects data for these small island states, including population, land area (square kilometers), number of overnight stays, number of cruise arrivals, and inbound revenue as a percentage of GDP.

As evidenced in Table 2.1., there is tremendous variation across these indicators. Note, for example, that several of these “small” islands boast areas well above the 10,000–11,000 square kilometer threshold as described above (e.g., Bahamas, Fiji, Jamaica, and Papua New Guinea). On the other hand, there remain a number of small island states that do not report this basic tourism data to the UNWTO. While recognized as fitting the working definition of a small island state, these territories are excluded from comparative view, as if they are uninhabited or did not exist at all. We believe that such exclusion does a disservice to island research, a reflection of arbitrary definitions of these spaces, and a paucity of data to date. And yet, small island states are perhaps as diverse as they are similar (Doumenge & Decoudras, 2010).

It is therefore critical to recognize that this designation and definition is not monolithic. This is true across oceans and seas as well as within the same body of water. The vast Pacific Island (PI) archipelago, for example, comprises Polynesia, the “many” islands, Micronesia, the “small” islands, and Melanesia, the “Black” islands. The islands of Micronesia, a region that includes approximately 2100 islands and a total ocean area of 7,400,000 square kilometers (Kirch, 1997, 2017) are not the only “small” islands in the PI archipelago. Niue, a Polynesian island