Research Paper

Re-branding alternative tourism in the Caribbean: The case for 'slow tourism'

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ABSTRACT Slow tourism represents a progressive genre of alternative tourism for remote locales in the Caribbean beyond mass-tourism complexes. We propose this new form of slow tourism as a viable promotional identity for alternative tourist offerings, which are in need of re-branding, through the decentralized medium of information technologies. A further contribution to this new construct's identity is our recognition of the potential for the Caribbean diaspora to participate as stakeholders in slow tourism ventures in under-developed spaces of the Caribbean that lack the requisite resources and bundle of social and economic advantages that mass-tourism relies upon. Thus, the unevenness of tourism-driven development in the Caribbean can be countered progressively, and more inclusively, than in times past. In addition to developing the theoretical construct of slow tourism, we offer several prototype examples to demonstrate quality offerings already in praxis.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in the Caribbean has been cautioned regarding its rapid growth, volatile fluctuations in response to market

downturns, and its long-term viability and sustainability (Duval and Wilkinson, 2004; Weaver, 2004; Pattullo, 2005). Early experiences with the development of mass-tourism in the Caribbean[1] were accompanied by high levels of foreign-dependency in the promotion and management of this fledgling industry that was, for the most part, unregulated and poorly planned (Wilkinson, 1997). Not surprisingly, the earlier decades of this problematic ensemble's growth were characterized by volatility and vulnerability to financial crises (Conway, 1983). Later, the global economy's embracing of neo-liberalism after the late 1970s and early 1980s downturn (Harvey, 2003; Conway and Heynen, 2006; Timms, 2009), far from making the Caribbean's tourist industries more secure, has brought about another severe crisis in the early years of the twenty-first century. The combination of biophysical threats such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the growing threats from environmental change leading to intensified hurricanes and rises in sea level, and the severe global recession in 2009 heralded another round of critical despondency about the industry's viability and sustainability in such small vulnerable island states (Briguglio, 1995; Pelling and Uitto, 2001; Boruff and Cutter, 2007; MacGregor *et al,* 2009).

Considering that even with these difficulties tourism has become the most important asset to the national economies of much of the region's countries, it is vitally important that the region learns from these previous mistakes to avoid repeating them in the future (WTTC, 2004; Timms, 2009). This cautionary proviso is supported by Butler's (1980) famous model highlighting the evolutionary stages in the tourism product life cycle, ending with either decline or revitalization of the industry. Subsequently, de Albuquerque and McElroy (1992) and McElroy and de Albuquerque (1998) empirically affirmed the applicability of Butler's model to over 30 Caribbean small island developing states, where countries have progressed upward in their tourism life cycle from an emergent Stage I to the rapid expansion of Stage II and, finally, mass-market maturity and saturation in Stage III (McElroy and de Albuquerque, 1991). What is important to note from these arguments is the need to avoid stagnation or decline once a tourism market reaches these latter stages.

For the Caribbean tourism industry to continue to prosper and adjust to future competition and the changing demands of the global market place, it needs continual renewal and revitalization of its offerings. As Daye *et al* (2008) claim, we need to be more attuned to the industry's vulnerabilities and its volatility as a regionally diverse phenomenon and be more willing 'to clarify the unique experiences and practices of Caribbean tourism' (p. 7). Utilizing the last observation as a point of departure, we propose a shift in strategies to encourage the diversification of offerings under the promotional umbrella of 'slow tourism', where in addition to the established mass-tourism infrastructure there is niche marketing for alternative tourisms that focus on quality upgrading rather than merely increasing the quantity of visitors.

Building upon earlier models of alternative tourism, we propose a more culturally sensitive, authentic and encompassing slow tourism model as a revitalized new tourism for the twenty-first century in the Caribbean. Although a successor to the 'new tourism' of the 1980s and early 1990s (Weaver, 1991; Conway, 1993; Poon, 1994), it advances the genre by embracing the best notions of 'development-from-below' models that democratize tourism planning, management and benefits.[2] We highlight the central role of global information technologies and communication media for promoting and securing slow tourism's diverse offerings and experiences which, for example, decentralizes the tourist industry from foreign-control toward local empowerment. A final contribution to this new construct's identity – which places it in a future, more diverse and competitive tourism world – is our recognition of the potential for transnational families, emigrant diaspora networks, return migrants and remittance donors to participate as entrepreneurs and

stakeholders in slow tourism ventures (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997; Conway, 2007; Conway and Potter, 2007). To add empirical substance to our theoretical construct, we offer an abbreviated list of slow tourism prototypes to demonstrate that many of our ideas about 'quality offerings' are already in existence and *praxis*. As geographically advantageous locations have been largely over-saturated with mass-tourism complexes, and are in danger of stagnation and decline, we highlight more marginal locations whereby lessons from the unregulated and unplanned past can be heeded in developing slow tourism alternatives that avoid the negatives of unfettered mass-tourism development and serve to revitalize the Caribbean tourism industry.

SLOW TOURISM'S PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

New tourism as precedent

As early as the mid-1980s, recognition of the changing demographics in two of the Caribbean's major markets – North America and Europe – and the resultant market differentiation of savvy tourists seeking varied experiences from their visits culminated in persuasive arguments about the need for a 'new tourism'. Initially pertaining to well-traveled mature tourists whose life styles and self-perceptions as environmentally and socially conscious guests seeking authentic experiences (Poon, 1989), this new tourism was characterized as being small in scale and minimal in its social and environmental impacts. Examples of such new tourist cohorts that were already beginning to travel to the Caribbean included sports tourists, ethnic and diaspora tourists, and nature tourists (Conway, 1993). New tourism, henceforth, was hailed as a worthy successor to replace the old mass-tourism of yester year; 'a tourism of the future … characterized by flexibility, segmentation and more authentic tourism experiences' (Poon, 1994, p. 91).

Ecotourism is a prime example of the new tourism movement that focused on nature experiences while striving for environmental sustainability (Conway and Timms, 2003; Weaver, 2004). For those concerned more about sustaining local livelihoods there was the advent of community-based tourism (Milne and Ewing, 2004). The same can be said for other alternatives as well, such as heritage tourism's focus on cultural attributes (Pulsipher, 1992, 1999; Nuryanti, 1996; Hawkes and Kwortnik, 2006) and pro-poor tourism's defined interest in poverty reduction (Torres and Momsen, 2004; Lewis and Brown, 2007). All of these alternative tourism models are related in their attempts to maintain and/or improve local conditions – be it environmental, cultural or socio-economic.

However, we believe that in their differentiation they have segmented the basic precept of new tourism; namely resistance to increasing global pressures brought on by modern industrial society, such as the negative repercussions of mass-tourism. In some cases, even the identity of these individual alternative tourisms have been co-opted by mass-tourism enterprises, such as the use of the term 'ecotourism', with resultant application of policies that can have negative socio-economic and cultural repercussions (Carrier and Macleod, 2005). Hence, we believe there needs to be a re-conceptualization of new tourism that is holistic and returns to the original premise of being the antithesis to mass-tourism. In doing so we are not advocating a replacement of other diverse models of alternative tourisms – ecotourism, nature tourism, agro-tourism, heritage tourism, and the like. Rather, we view our new conception of 'slow tourism' as a promotional vehicle that philosophically identifies the core problem relating to the saturation of mass-tourism resulting from unsustainable hard growth and development axioms (Conway and Timms, 2003), and avoids it.

Defining slow tourism

Like its new tourism predecessor, 'slow tourism' is both a promotional and tactile model that builds upon the earlier 1990s advocacy of Poon

(1994) for an alternative to mass-tourism that is regenerative through meeting the maturing needs of a growing cohort of new tourists. As a derivative of the Italian-born 'Slow Food Movement', it is guided by a focus on relieving the time-space pressures that accumulate in today's alienated capitalist life-worlds (Harvey, 1989). The quintessential antonym for 'slow food' is 'fast food', whereby the latter's manifestation represents not only the quickening of life's pace, and resultant increase in the quantity of good's consumed, but also the separation of consumers from the product which masks the social, cultural and environmental consequences of its production. Slow food represents the antithesis of the 'fast life' by advocating 'a firm defense of quiet material pleasure …. developing taste rather than demeaning it … and setting about this [through] an international exchange of experiences, knowledge, projects' (Slow Food International, 2008, p. 44).

In a similar fashion, slow tourism stands as the antithesis to mass-tourism's standardization of product that relies on increasing the quantity of tourists moved through the system with little regard to either the quality of the tourists' experience or the benefits that accrue to the localities the tourist visits. Instead, the primary objective of mass-tourism is fixated on profit generation, often for foreign corporate shareholders. Yet this foreign profit motive, as the primary focus of mass-tourism entities, stands opposed to the goals of alternative tourism proponents as the high level of foreign capital leakage from tourism attests, which in varying Caribbean island states can range from 40 to 85 per cent (Potter *et al*, 2004; Pattullo, 2005; Timms, 2006). Slow tourism aims to counter these negative externalities with an 'identity' that promotes sustainability and conviviality and focuses upon countering the loss of local distinctiveness as it relates to leisure, sense of place, hospitality and rest and recuperation (Woehler, 2004).

Slow tourism shares the anti-mass-tourism goals of the new tourism model, but by bringing the social demographic context forward into the current era it has an unique identity that offers a more sustainable, humanistic, eco-friendly tourism product that is a less alienated (and alienating) experience for both hosts and guests alike. For 'guests' (a preferred identity to that of 'slow tourist') the primary benefit is tangible recuperation through avoiding the stresses associated with the increasing speed our world works in; be it at work, at home, at the dinner table, or even on vacation. By maximizing the enjoyment and quality of their off-work time at the expense of the quantity of experiences consumed, which often dominates vacations hour-by-hour in a frenzied attempt to see and do everything, we can both slow down the pace of vacation and promote locale inclusiveness. This caters to the growing numbers of seasoned and globally experienced travelers who prefer heightened quality of life experiences which offer a variety of local community tourism leisure-environments while minimizing negative social, cultural and environmental impacts on local host communities. At the same time, local control of planning, managing and implementing slow tourism enterprises should combat the foreign capital leakage and promote equitable socio-economic benefits to local communities and limit environmental pressures (Renard, 2001).

So, building upon the Slow Food Movement what should our 'Slow Tourism Manifesto' for the Caribbean look like? First, slow tourism should offer suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment to preserve the discerning inquisitive but well-meaning 'tourist as guest' from the contagion of the multitude of mass-tourist acolytes who 'mistake frenzy for efficiency' (Irving, 2008, p. 44). Second, the slow tourism movement should be focused on countering the loss of local distinctiveness as it relates to leisure, conviviality, sense of place and hospitality (Woehler, 2004). More generally, slow tourism should focus on local distinctiveness and explicitly link the three E's of sustainable development – environment, economy and equity (Campbell, 1996). This entails

encouraging new ideas about how to grow locales in more conscious and measured ways so that alternative, more inclusive, community centered and regional regimes are formed from the existing cultural hearths of local practice and communal/familial knowledge that have always existed in the many overlooked, marginal and out-of-the-way locales of Caribbean islands.

As a partner to Caribbean tourism's sun, sand and sea tourism, or to other sustainable alternative tourism offerings that may be specific to particular islands, slow tourism's 'R & R' (Rest and Relaxation) initiatives in relatively inaccessible locales of Caribbean islands should also serve as a nearby alternative option, and/or an extension of the tourist stay, that further enriches and diversifies the overall experience. In short, slow tourism can successfully aid and abet other tourism offerings, by providing a period of rest and recuperation that deepens the level of overall enjoyment and heightens the returns that leisure provides to overall wellbeing (Dunn, 1959).

Remoteness and relative inaccessibility as an advantage for slow tourism

Interestingly, geography also plays a role in our concept of slow tourism. Since it is the antithesis of mass-tourism, it also exists in spaces that have been overlooked as prime locations for tourism development. Locations easily accessible to major markets such as Europe and North America, as defined by direct air service and proximate location to these airports (Conway and Jemiolo, 1991), which also are 'blessed' with the sun, sand and sea, have most often been targeted for mass-tourism complexes (Davenport and Jackiewicz, 2008). However, most of the examples we will identify as 'prototypes' of slow tourism exist in out-of-the way remote locales that lack typical mass-tourism characteristics and, hence, occupy locations that are considered geographically marginal.[3]

Geographically remote locations, which are less endowed with the traditional Caribbean coastal zone amenities and urban infrastructural advantages, have not come under the 'gaze' of mass-tourism developers and planners. As a result, geographic remoteness and relative inaccessibility provides 'undeveloped spaces' for alternative and diverse forms of tourism to take root and develop in such remoter 'locales' in the Caribbean – be it ignored small islands or remote sections of larger ones. In these inaccessible locales, both in the Caribbean and elsewhere around the world, diversity may have receded in the face of globalization and its homogenizing effects, but it has not yet disappeared. Rather it remains out-of-sight if not out-of-mind. It would be wise, then, to find and promote alternative models of sustainable tourism in these locales that maximize local benefits while enhancing the overall breadth of tourism offerings beyond the coastal zone concentrations. Hence, our concept of slow tourism not only promotes niche marketing of new alternative styles of tourism, but also represents a democratization of control, and benefits, of tourism development. Of considerable significance in this 'development-from-below' priority, though not exclusive to the concept, is that community-based tourism and pro-poor tourism initiatives can find a 'home' in the suite of offerings 'slow tourism' can nurture. At the other end of the scale, and as an up-scale, entity with considerable growth potential and leverage in slow tourism's revitalization efforts, even the 'Slow Food Movement' and its 'convivia' can become active partners; given the potential for locals and participating 'guests' to revel in the quality, and diversity of island-specific cuisines that fit that global movement's ideals so well.[4]

SLOW TOURISM AND THE CARIBBEAN TOURIST MARKET

Holistic umbrella for alternative tourisms

Slow tourism, based on the Slow Food Movement's philosophical basis, stands as the antithesis to mass-tourism, as potentially sustainable

socially, economically and environmentally. Hence, it coalesces the goals of many other alternative tourisms – the environmental prospects of ecotourism (Weaver, 2004; Klak, 2007), the poverty reduction goals of pro-poor tourism (Torres and Momsen, 2004; Ashley *et al*, 2006), the linkage-induced stimulation effects of agro-tourism (Momsen, 1998; Timms, 2006, 2009), the cultural aspects of heritage tourism (Pulsipher, 1992, 1999), the egalitarian efforts of community tourism (Milne and Ewing, 2004), among others. The generalized strength of its humanistic ethical position lies in its stress on quality considerations rather than quantity realizations. The former, therefore, becomes the preferred path and way forward for all stakeholders, through advancing sustainable options over pure growth and development and focusing on the adoption of this alternative, appropriately people-centered and participatory, inclusive model in remote interior and more inaccessible coastal locations throughout the Caribbean.

At the same time, to ensure Caribbean tourism's authenticity and each island-society's unique tourism identities, the future is best assured when the ownership of the variety of tourism offerings and specialties remain in the hands of local stakeholders, local entrepreneurs and local consortiums. The accompanying caveat to this optimal goal of regional or national ownership and control of tourist ventures is that community-participation and less centralized participatory planning of 'bottom-up' inclusiveness and consensus-making in such tourism ventures is not at all easy to implement, or successfully organize. This is because the hierarchical and oft-times undemocratic power relations within just about all Caribbean societies favor 'top-down' practices, and only rarely has community-level ownership of local projects been successful over the long haul (Pugh and Potter, 2003).

Ideally, wider communities with internal and external roots and cooperative interests – non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) – must also be fully involved in participatory roles, while benefitting politically, economically and socially from such shared ownership and participation. Furthermore, the state's institutional and legislative oversight and promotion of such an inclusive tourist industry, must also act on their citizenry's behalf to help promote and sustain the industry in all its forms, corporate, small business and co-operative/communal. Together with tourism industry partnerships and regional institutions such as Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), state governments must help secure (and ensure) local authority, and necessary regional and national support in line with the principals and best practices of development-from-below programs and initiatives that bring tangible rewards and returns to the host society at large, and to its more underprivileged classes in particular. Pro-poor tourism and community-based tourism are two such progressive vehicles (Renard, 2001; Milne and Ewing, 2004; Torres and Momsen, 2004; Lewis and Brown, 2007).

The democratic role of information technologies

Mass-tourism has generally developed and been defined as a centralized system, including booking options, which is a main source of profit leakage of the tourism industry in the Caribbean (Pattullo, 2005). However, the advent of information technologies and access to it in even remote locales has allowed broader participation and control by local communities, particularly in tourism. Interestingly, Poon (1990) anticipated the amazing development of the internet as a major dimension in tourism decision-making by more than a decade and recognized that the keys to the industry's 'flexible specialization' lay in the following: information technological applications, networks, synergies, scope economies, production and organizational flexibility (Poon, 1990, 1993, 1994).

These days, information technological advances in e-marketing, the rapid development among Caribbean tourism entrepreneurs of local websites promoting their island's various

offerings, readily accommodate many a mature tourist's travel planning, so that local itineraries and more variety in experiences can be organized by discerning tourists. Hence, information technological networking, website development and centralized promotions of locally run activities will definitely be a sustaining feature of slow tourism's overall collective identity. Information technologies and global communication networks can effectively and efficiently give voice and design to the uniqueness of community level alternative tourism offerings and experiences. Slow tourism, through this widely cast interactive medium, can then foster, promote and promise a myriad of collective offerings as representatives of each island's unique and authentic mix of environmental, socio-cultural, participatory and inclusive characteristics that cultivates quality in experience and enjoyment of hosts and guests alike.

The slow tourism identity is advanced as an inclusive alternative promotional model that can serve as an ideal umbrella under which a mix of community based and locally managed small businesses and endeavors can be coordinated and given an external identity and market-window through centralized, institutional and privately operated information technological websites. These locally operated websites in each Caribbean venue should be able to provide would-be slow tourists, in the main metropolitan markets of North America and Europe, very specific information about the mix of alternative offerings available that provide a quality experience worth repeating, and certainly with the much-needed authenticity that is oft-times lacking in the mass-tourism package.

The role of the Caribbean diaspora

One overlooked ensemble of people who are, or could become, local, national and global stakeholders in this now-deeply embedded, local-to-global tourism industry are Caribbean 'movers' – transnational families, emigré diasporic networks, return migrants, remittances donors, and, of course, national citizens who stay, while other family move away, circulate, move back, or stay away. These global stakeholders promote local community development through remittances, contributing to disaster relief, investing savings in land 'back home', undertaking professional visits to do business and commerce, provide health services, conduct education workshops, give management advice, among many other roles (Mills, 2005; Conway, 2007). These groups can be active both as tourist participants seeking heightened quality of life experiences (Conway and Potter, 2007) and as entrepreneurs contributing to the small-business side of such low-impact tourism in remoter locales (Chevannes and Ricketts, 1997).

Slow tourism should definitely appeal to the islands' diaspora and returning nationals who visit 'home' regularly and repetitively (Conway, 1993; Mills 2005; Conway and Potter 2007) as tourist participants reliving their childhoods, as visitors reminding themselves of the remoter locales they have visited earlier or heard about, and as enthusiastic new members of civil society associations in the home land to which they have returned. Returning nationals are obvious candidates as valuable players in slow tourism's spaces and places which bring them heightened quality of life experiences. And, in terms of the small-business side of such low-impact tourism, slow tourism should appeal to returning first-generation retirees, who originally emigrated from those more remote locales – small islands, peripheral rural regions, remote coastal villages, inaccessible interior mountain or forested regions. They are the ones who have discretionary social and financial capital to invest in small-scale services, bed and breakfast hostels, family-home 'time-shares' and apartment rentals, owner-managed restaurants and bars, home-based traditional food production, and who want to 'give something back' (Gmelch, 2006; Conway, 2007).

SLOW TOURISM'S 'PROTOTYPES'

The CTO has long served the region in promoting best-practices in the industry (Holder,

1979, 2000; Conway, 1983; Duval and Wilkinson, 2004). So, it should not be surprising that examples of quality offerings are as prevalent as disappointing ones, or that successful ventures of the type Poon's (1990, 1994) 'new tourism' championed came into existence in response to the changing nature of globalization forces impacting international business in general, and Caribbean tourism specifically. Given the maturation of tourist industries across the region, the Caribbean has moved to the forefront in some environmentally conscious initiatives in their respective tourism sectors. For example, the region leads all others in Green Globe certification of 57 hotels ranging from exclusive resorts to medium-sized inns and eco-lodges, and there are two regional auditing institutions – SGS Jamaica Supervise Ltd and Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards – that undertake initial accreditation and subsequent renewals (Green Globe, 2010).

Environmental NGOs such as the Caribbean Conservation Association, the Caribbean Forest Conservation Association (CFCA), the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), and the many islands' National Trusts have long histories of activism and activity in the conservation and preservation of the islands environmental resources. As a result, the region's educated youth have grown up environmentally conscious and knowledgeable about their homelands' territorial limits and the threats to biodiversity that landscape changes such as urban growth and sprawling built environments bring on. The region's overall well-educated and highly literate populations, therefore, constitute a flexible resource of significant worth capable of responding democratically and purposefully to influence political agendas, fight to retain local community authority, and strongly favor populist and socially just programs that sustain their territorial homelands. In short, the region's comparatively abundant human and social capital stocks, though spread out in some 30-plus countries, favor the model of alternative tourism promotion we have introduced.

The proof of this claim lies in some of the practices underway that we view as 'prototype' examples of slow tourism, based on our own specific field experiences. Though a modest listing, they demonstrate that quality offerings of the community based, participatory type of slow tourism we envisage are already in existence, and that the potential they offer in terms of their diversity and attractiveness is encouraging. The following prototypes suggest there is definitely a productive place for slow tourism in tomorrow's mix of Caribbean quality-offerings that can ensure revitalization and renewal, as well as a welcome widening of the industry's market competitiveness and promise of a firmer sustainable footprint.

Slow community tourism in treasure beach, Jamaica

Treasure Beach is made up of a series of small fishing villages on Jamaica's southwest coast with a marginal geography that is partly responsible for its lack of mass-tourism. For one, it is a long 2-4-hour harrowing drive along sub-par roads from the airports in Montego Bay or Kingston. Further, it lies in the rain-shadow of Jamaica's central mountain chain which leaves it relatively hot and dry in comparison to the north-coast, where the majority of Jamaica's mass-tourism complexes are situated. And while the north-coast also boasts calm azure seas with sparkling white sand beaches, Treasure Beach is relegated rougher ocean conditions and brown-colored sand beaches. However, this very geographic marginality which limits its attractiveness to mass-tourism acolytes has also allowed Treasure Beach to develop its own unique form of slow tourism (Hawkins, 1999).

For starters, accommodations in the area are limited to 15 rooms per acre, which is half the density allowed on the rest of the island. This was a deliberate decision to further exclude mass-tourism development (Jason Henzell, 2007, personal communication). Second, it has a range of small accommodation types that cater to a wide-spectrum of tourists from the

upscale to backpackers, ensuring a diversity of visitors. Third, it includes fishing in traditional boats with local fisherman and they host an annual fishing tournament to raise funds for the local fishing cooperative and BRED's, a community development NGO (Treasure Beach.net, 2010). But, more importantly, the focus of the tourist visit is on experiencing and interacting with the local community while the benefits of their stay are directed back to the well-being of the community itself. For example, one US dollar for every occupied room in participating tourist accommodations is funneled back to community development groups that sponsor health and youth sporting programs, assist fishing cooperatives and even organize disaster relief assistance.

One of the major promoters for this style of tourism is the local web-portal TreasureBeach .net (2010). Created in 2000, the site combines tourism promotion with local community development, as stated on its homepage:

- to supply information to future Treasure Beach visitors;
- to provide an internet presence for area organizations involved in education, environmental awareness and neighborhood projects;
- to help maintain Treasure Beach's essence of a community, not individual interests;
- to further the belief that development must benefit the entire community, not just the tourism sector.

As an example of its offerings, one can search for accommodation while reading the profiles of local citizens written by primary school students and posted on the forum while keeping up-to-date on local conversations and debates on community events. Community development groups also are given a web-presence through the portal and, significantly, TreasureBeach.net was used after Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and Hurricane Dean in 2007 to raise a combined US$36 000 in relief funds online from overseas donors.

These donors were part of the Caribbean diaspora – be they past tourists, current friends, overseas families or former residents – who were kept updated by TreasureBeach.net before, during and after the storm about its affects on the community. In effect, information technologies related to the combined foci of tourism promotion and community development facilitated the involvement of the diaspora in not only community development, but disaster recovery. It is such synergies that we believe make the concept of slow tourism a powerful descendant of Poon's (1989, 1990, 1993, 1994) past conception of new tourism reworked for the modern age.

Slow nature tourism in central Barbados

Away from its popular and now-crowded mass-tourism zones of the South and West coasts, Barbados has a remoter, but reasonably accessible, mix of nature tourism sites in its interior that offer comfortable and easy-paced, slow tourism experiences. With no order of importance intended, Andromeda Gardens, Flower Forest, Orchid World, Welshman Hall Gully, Harrison's Cave, Farley Hill Park and Barbados Wildlife Reserve, all offer inquisitive and discerning tourists who seek an alternative to mass-tourism's sun, sand and sea experiences. Instead, they provide opportunities to enjoy verdant tropical landscapes, forested valleys and gullies, and hill-side nature reserves by walking, photographing, sitting awhile and learning first-hand about these Caribbean vistas at their leisure.

Currently, these attractions are operated to compete for visitors, despite the obvious overlaps and mutual interests, since as small businesses they each seek to profit from their visiting volumes to stay in business, to undertake maintenance and upkeep, and to repair their facilities. A combined slow tourism identity, that adds its philosophical weight to the nature-tourism offerings of the collectivity of this mix of ventures, might very well be a boost with mutual benefits for all, rather than

a competitive race. Associated craft workshops might be also added to the mix of slow tourism experiences, since Earthworks and Chalky Mount pottery making are two interesting production sites of clay art and functional work that are also within easy reach of the aforementioned nature reserves and locales. Cooperation rather than competition could collectively increase their attractiveness to slow tourists and spread the benefits more equitably.

Slow nature tourism in Trinidad and Tobago

The remoteness of the Toco- Matura- Grand Riviere region in the northeast of Trinidad has helped in the local development of a 'soft', co-management ecotourism model centered on the preservation of breeding sites for the endangered leatherback turtle (James and Fournillier, 1993; Harrison, 2007). Nature tourism and bird watching at the Asa Wright Center, also in northern Trinidad, adds to the mix of offerings in these remoter locales. Coordination of visits by enthusiasts and eco-volunteers, and the continued collaborative involvement of local NGOs and IGOs with local communities and stakeholders in the conservation and preservation of endangered species – birds as well as turtles – would be enhanced if slow tourism was to serve as a partner to these eco-tourism ventures; a dual identity that would increase the viability of the overall mix of offerings similar to the Barbados case.

Slow agro-tourism in Caribbean fishing communities

A type of agro-tourism that fits our slow tourism approach for remoter locales is participation in local communal fishing activities. Not only will this offering appeal to enthusiastic anglers and sport fishermen as a widening of their experiences but also as a heightening of their appreciation for other experts' skills in this demanding activity. An example of this are the specialist hotels and modest accommodations offered to visitors at Puente Allen, and its particular focus on the special art of 'bone-fishing' – using fly-fishing techniques on the Caribbean coast of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula.

Elsewhere in the insular Caribbean, artisanal fishing is common in many remoter coastal localities, but it is rarely recognized as an opportunity that could be expanded to include slow tourists or any among the richer, cosmopolitan classes, in large part because of age-old, class-based social stigmas attached to such small-scale, 'traditional' vocations. An exception, and a model to draw upon, is the eco-tourism initiative underway in Costa Rica, where two allied artisanal fishery cooperatives are working to include eco-tourism adventures in Tárcoles in a small, community-based marine tourism business. These consist of guided artisanal fishing tours with linesmen and mussel collectors that allow tourists to learn about local fishing practices, biodiversity and sustainability (Eco-Index Sustainable Tourism, 2010) similar to the former example of Treasure Beach, Jamaica.

'Sail fast, live slow' in the Grenadines

The Grenadines and other small island groupings in the Caribbean, such as Turks and Caicos, the British Virgin Islands, and some of the outer islands in the Bahamas, have developed niche markets in yachting, bare boat chartering, yacht marina development, marina servicing, racing regattas, dry-land storage and the like. Catering to a relatively affluent client-pool of yacht-owners and sailing enthusiasts, these specialist markets have grown in size and the contributions being made to what were once relatively small isolated 'off-the-beaten' track communities has substantially grown. One example we can count as a prototype is the following: during the winter tourist season, in Mayreau, the Grenadines, a windjammer schooner and other 'yachties' participate in a locally organized day and night-long party complete with the Mayreau String Band, dinner and a 'bar-crawl' in which host and

guests mingle, dance, make 'old-talk' and generally enjoy 'an unforgettable experience' (Toy and Martin, 2003). In effect, guests and hosts celebrate together in a more authentic and local manner which is more inclusive and lessens the social distance between locals and tourists.

CONCLUSIONS

Being left-out of mass-tourism's rapid and rampant growth and the virtual filling-up of the more accessible coastal zones most favored for sun, sea and sand enjoyments has meant that the once-overlooked interiors and remoter inaccessible coastal zones have retained much of their authenticity, communal strengths and slower-paced ambience. With revitalization being sought as Stage III maturation and stagnation of many Caribbean tourist product cycles challenges us to look beyond the boundary, slow tourism becomes a viable alternative for these undeveloped remote locales.

Belatedly perhaps, planners and tourism promoters in the Caribbean are beginning to recognize that a widening of their tourism sector's diversity in the mix of offerings is advantageous because it promises revitalization and renewal, even where mass-tourism stagnation appears irreversible. Slow tourism can serve as the promotional identity under which quality offerings, community-level and local participatory initiatives, and island-specific alternative tourisms can be marketed and supported. With the help of local information technologies and web-based information systems to facilitate information sharing of best practices, more sustainable tourism will be possible, and successful. Such sustainable forms best fit the interests of the local, national and global stakeholders in the tourism bundle and satisfy their tourist guests so that many become repeat visitors.

Being practical and realistic about the difficulties of launching slow tourism in such previously overlooked and under-developed locales, the modest pace and limited scale of development of slow tourism that we envisage occurring will limit its ability to be the panacea for all of the Caribbean tourism industry's problems with stagnation and losses in competitiveness. However, it can be a partner to many Caribbean islands' conventional sun, sand and sea tourism offerings to not only provide a more comprehensive tourism product, but ameliorate the often-produced uneven landscapes that mass-tourism's penetration have caused, or exacerbated.

Slow tourism initiatives in the remoter locales, or the remote un-developed island-dependencies, can also serve as a partner to many island-specific 'new tourism' alternatives – sport tourism, heritage tourism, agro-tourism and ecotourism derivatives. Selective types of such 'alternative tourism' efforts can be enriched and made even more attractive niche markets to today's discerning and oft-travelled mature tourists by the encouragement of slow tourism practices, and slow tourism immersions in which family and partner participations are incorporated into the slow tourism product. This means that along with such specialist offerings to tourist enthusiasts of fishing, scuba-diving, snorkeling, bird-watching, marine turtle watching and other Caribbean leisure activities, including sailing, kayaking, walking, surfing, swimming and hiking, there are more diverse 'bundles' of slow tourism offerings for the accompanying family members. Such diversity of offerings might include – meals, evening meetings, communal get-togethers, musical and cultural events, in which the remote region's local heritages and cultural riches can be showcased and shared alike by tourists and locals with their families and friends as inclusive participants.

Slow tourism's diversity of offerings can obviously occur both in remoter interiors and more distant coastal zones, as restaurant and local cuisine 'prototypes' which follow the ideals of the 'Slow Food Movement' in terms of authenticity, quality and local heritages can be found in many mature Caribbean tourism industries – in Martinique, Barbados and Tobago, for example.[5] It is also not beyond

conception that among some of tomorrow's selective, 'green' enclave resorts, slow tourism's ideals and practices can be embraced and implemented as a viable, upscale marketing strategy that sets them apart from the typical mass-tourism '3-S's offerings that have carried them so far, yet in the near future will have widening appeal to tomorrow's cohorts of discerning 'guests' who seek shared, life-experiences in the more cosmopolitan and mature, post-colonial Caribbean societies, that have emerged since the 1960s.

Concerning the scope and scale of slow tourism's evolution beyond its inception, it is expected that such alternative new tourism initiatives – be they eco-tourism, nature tourism, community and heritage tourism – and the resultant accompanying small-scale tourist businesses and services that will be established in rural, or small island, marginal locales will start small and local. Furthermore, many will probably always need to stay small and remain locally managed. It would be unsustainable for them to expand and morph into larger and larger micro-enterprises that cannot be sustained at the operational scale of the initial family business or locally owned and operated cooperative; so, small needs to be beautiful and possible (Schumacher, 1973; McRobie, 1981).

The continued control by local entrepreneurs and community stakeholders is not by any means assured, however. Failures of participatory planning initiatives in the Caribbean remind us of the imbalances in local political power and authority that have plagued cooperative movements and community collectives in places like Barbados, Belize, St. Lucia and Quintana Roo, Mexico (Pugh and Potter, 2003). On the other hand, a successful example of local control and planning was highlighted in our case study of Treasure Beach, Jamaica, where local stakeholders in community-based tourism were able to pass an ordinance limiting the number of hotel rooms per acre; thereby thwarting any incursion by large mass-tourism resorts.

Hence, government oversight, and political support of such local democratic initiatives to ensure the stakeholders' communal rights are honored and to prevent foreign or outsider takeovers will be an essential part of our proposed project. As Pugh (2003) would have it, following Mouffe's (2002) recommendations, there needs to be a wider pluralism and respect for difference in identifications for citizens that is more democratic. He calls for a 'radical democracy' that redefines social class stratification and power-relations within contemporary Caribbean societies. Only then will participatory planning of community-based alternative tourism projects be able to continue to function effectively, and democratically, for all local stakeholders.

Slow tourism is, therefore, a centrally supported, public-private sector partnership that promotes a competitive identity of quality offerings which are sustainable alternatives to mass-tourism on several counts, as we have mentioned. Slow tourism is a visiting experience that is more authentic, slower-paced and flexible, which also meets the host communities' favor as best practices for themselves and their guests. It can be better planned and co-managed at the community level, and can be pro-poor, participatory and 'bottom-up', rather than 'top-down' in its organizational forms. It is appropriate as well as viable for the geographically diverse, remoter interiors of Caribbean islands – big and small and very small. It can be fostered in the still un-developed and under-developed less-accessible Caribbean coastal territories that do not have the requisite resources and bundle of social and economic advantages that mass-tourism needed and still needs. Thus, the unevenness of tourism-driven development that has often favored urban and coastal spaces at the expense of rural and interior locales can be countered progressively, and more inclusively, than in times past.

NOTES

1 The Caribbean Sea designates the geographical region in question, so that all the islands

(except Bermuda) and their dependencies are included, together with the Caribbean coastal regions of Mexico's Yucatan peninsular and Central America. We therefore exclude the three 'Caribbean' enclave countries in South America - Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, and the coastal regions of Venezuela and Colombia.

2 'Participatory planning' in which all local stakeholders are involved in consensus building and community-level management of their local resource bundles or tourism ventures are, however, more difficult to achieve and sustain in the Caribbean than to conceive and implement, as several of the contributions in Pugh and Potter's (2003) collection demonstrate. 'Slow tourism' might very well meet similar challenges, if the post-colonial hierarchies of power and authority of island political arenas that stymied, or usurped participatory planning's local democratic processes continue to privilege mass-tourism and hard growth axioms, while giving insufficient support to the incubation and development of more diverse, alternative tourism offerings that will help and sustain the industry's overall revitalization and revival (Conway and Timms 2003).

3 When we use the term 'geographically marginal' to characterize relatively remote 'undeveloped spaces' this is not meant to imply that such internal locales are 'backward', or 'traditional'. Most Caribbean small island societies have exceptionally high literacy rates and relatively large, well-educated middle-classes, so that the conventional internal dichotomy of Third World/Global South regional unevenness that depicts stark contrasts between advanced urban realms in coastal zones with depressed, 'backward' rural peripheries scarcely fits anymore. Rather, and specific to mass-tourism's early dominance in the most favorably situated coastal locations, it is the remoter, 'undeveloped' interiors, or more distant coastal areas and island dependencies that now provide opportunities for 'slow tourism' alternative offerings.

4 The Terra Madre I-tal (Rastafarian) community in Jamaica has recently opened a Slow Food 'convivia' (in July 2009) with a focus on traditional foods, regional products and dishes, to generate enthusiasm among young people about their local food culture.

5 Locally developed, 'Slow Food Movement' 'look-alikes' have been in existence for a long time, where local chefs and cooks produce 'traditional offerings' for tourists, locals and returning nationals. They introduce, remind or re-introduce (respectively) island-specific, 'creole food' in places like Bequia (Dawn's Creole Gardens), Barbados (Brown Sugar), Carriacou (Bogles Round House), Martinique (Yva Chez Vava) and Tobago (October's Blue Food Festival, Store Bay Food Kiosks).

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