

Winners and Losers: A Further Exploration and Reflection on the Influence of External Actors on Community-Based Tourism

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Abstract

Community based approaches to development have been touted as alternative modes to achieve sustainable community development. As such, CBT resonates with the alternative development paradigm. This article examines the influence of external actors in community-based tourism. It argues that while it may be helpful to have external actors during the initial stages CBT ventures, the overbearing influence of foreign actors, especially when they engage in direct competition with local communities, can work against the attainment of holistic community development and may result in losers and winners which results quite often in communities becoming losers given the power, financial, experience, capacity and resource differentials between multinational operators and local communities. This article posits a framework containing principles of engagement between communities and external partners: The principles include voluntarism, mutual learning, information sharing, trust-building, mutual respect, equality of partners, common cause, independence, zero tolerance to exploitation, joint-problem solving and survival and prosperity,

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1. Introduction

Community Based Tourism (CBT) has generally been considered as part of a wider community-based development strategy proposed as an alternative approach to western-centred strategies. As Telfer (2009:156) in the time context of the 1970s that CBT is associated with characteristics of an alternative development paradigm however it is not the only panacea to poverty reduction and community development (Suansri, 2003:7).

Despite critiques and doubts about its potential (see Mitchell and Muckosy, 2008; Goodwin and Santilli, 2009), CBT has great potential to foster community development given some positive impacts posted around the world (Nyaupane et al., 2006:1374; Mielke, 2012; Baktygulov and Raeva, 2010; Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2013). Asker et al (2010:9), also outlines various enabling and constraining conditions to CBT development but also cites shining examples of successful CBT ventures in both developed and developing countries by stating that there lessons to be learned from good practices, however there are also challenges and risks associated with CBT. Okazaki (2008:512) also claim that in spite of implementation barriers, the community based approach "is still the best course of action...."

As such it has been mentioned that it is necessary to be aware of who controls CBT ventures, thus it is important to consider as a primary matter for investigation who benefits - the local people? or the local elite? or external agents? exploiting the local people and resources (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008:115). Who are the winners and losers in the process? There is a need, therefore, to recognise and analyse the role of external actors and forces in CBT as Blackstock (2005:40) acknowledges the existence of 'external constraints to local control.' This article analyses the relation between CBT and external factors asit advocates CBT development in pursuit of social justice (see also Urquico, 1998:10). Blackstock (2005:40) perceives CBT as an 'imposter' for community development propelled by economic machinations of neo-liberalism and not based on community empowerment and social justice agenda. In view of that, this article proposes that social justice is sine qua non in just and democratic societies in which CBT is can be used to achieve social justice –

as Blackstock also seems to imply – neoliberal hegemonic milieu has an influence on CBT outcomes, as such in structuring CBT ventures, this factor should be taken into account.

Thus, there is a real need is to analyse the influence of external factors and entities on CBT development and to understand how they affect CBT at the local level. This reflective posture is not against the recognition of the equally genuine need for external facilitators to nurture and develop CBT it also does not suggest that the development of CBT should remain insulated from the many influences ranging from the more general global influences to the local context influences. Rather, this represents an expose of the way and results of the influence of external factors and entities on CBT based on their ideological posture and the means through which they intervene in the development of CBT.

In pursuit of this objective of analysing the role of external influences, Johnson (2010: 151) warns that while it has generally been accepted that CBT can deliver tangible benefits to communities, however, realising actual benefits is not easy to achieve such that CBT can be considered to be 'naïve and unrealistic' in a context in which an external and private firm is vying to enter a community in the rural areas.

This article adds the body of knowledge on CBT by arguing that despite the numerous writings and practical exercises on CBT, CBT has rarely been properly facilitated and this spawns the need to provide insight into the role of the external influences and entities in shaping the CBT enterprise. The external influences can be viewed through two lens, firstly, external agents implementing CBT projects or secondly, external agents affecting a locally developed CBT process.

2. Materials and Method

The article is based on literature review with the support of some case studies which are also literature based. The aim of this article is to assess the role and/or influence of external forces in CBT contexts and to unveil how specific judgements on CBT concepts and practices are modelled. Some internal matters can be (and often are) very much connected to external circumstances (such as the influence of the local elite and the need for marketing). Thus, the article takes, as a starting point, a CBT perspective in relation to external circumstances instead of looking at external forces as an fundamental challenge. As such it builds upon, and could be seen as an extension of Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2012).

3. Literature Review

3.1 The global context

Tourism is currently a major economic sector throughout the world and which also placed poverty alleviation on the tourism agenda (Hall, 2007:1). At the same time, global neoliberalism has become the hegemonic discourse (De Martino, 2003:402; Harvey, 2007:3) such that tourism is operating within a neoliberal economy (Chok et al, 2007:144; see also Milne and Ateljevic, 2001:371 and Giampiccoli,2007).. Within this context, there is inevitably the need to reflect on the role of political economy in tourism studies to in order to unpack the tension and social relations which emerge in specific modes in the development of tourism (Bianchi, 2002:267).

In relation to the evolutionary structure of the supply side of tourism in the diffusionist paradigm it has been noted that while control of the firms initially rests with locals, however large firms ultimately take over (Telfer, 2002:123). This point is critical in emphasizing the invidious transition in the tourism structure from local to external control. From a capitalist's perspective, tourism can thus be used as a sector to foster 'development diffusion' (see Bianchi, 2002:271). Similar thoughts have been advanced by Sofield (2003:164, 189) while investigating international cooperation activities in the tourism sector in the South Pacific Where remnants of neo-colonialism which led to disempowerment were observed in reality following the aid by the European Community to the South Pacific Tourism Organisation.

Therefore, as a background and underpinning framework, the analysis of tourism development in developing countries (or anywhere else) should consider the roles and influence of the global neo-liberal system or in a historical perspective, its related milieu of colonialism/neo-colonialism and capitalism. This is the reason why the influence of these global forces on tourism development is the main focus of this article with a motive to explore their consequences on CBT projects as well as their influence on previous locally initiated and controlled CBT projects.

3.2 A discordant discourse

Different terminologies, perspectives, practices and models of CBT make it somewhat difficult to have a concordant

understanding of it (Flacke-Naurdofer, 2008:246; Ndlovu and Rogerson, 2003:125;)¹. CBT approaches can differ in terms of, amongst other issues, perceived levels of community engagement, benefits as well as control of the proposed tourism ventures. The level of ownership/control, management and benefits, are important in the development of CBT. Ndlovu and Rogerson (2003:125) rightly argue it is less clear and opaque whether communities own, manage or facilitate in the enterprise or it is about creating jobs for locals or involving the community in decision-making. CBT ventures should be seen as CBEs (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013:2; Manyara and Jones, 2007). Peredo and Chrisman (2006:315, emphasis in original, see also Calanog et al, 2012:184) state: "CBEs [community-based enterprises] are owned, managed, and governed *by the people*, rather than by government or some smaller group of individuals *on behalf* of the people. ." Manyara and Jones (2007:637; see also Giampiccoli and Nauright, 2010:53) follow similar lines of thought when arguing that CBEs in tourism should focus on three main matters, namely, community-owned, fully involve community in development and management, and spread most benefits to the community. Thus, Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2013:11) advance that:

The bottom-line is that whatever type of CBT services or facilities is adopted, the ventures should remain fully owned, managed and controlled by community members (or a group of independent micro and small ventures under the same CBT management organization); external partners should provide facilitative and other supporting services such as marketing and skills development and not be partners in the CBT ventures themselves.

In this context, while external partnership and facilitation is possible (and often needed), it should be interpreted as a long-term but 'temporary' partnership to facilitate community empowerment (see Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013:9).

As earlier mentioned that both tourism and CBT remain enmeshed within the neoliberal global framework in which they endure its seemingly unfettered influence and control. This influence, especially from the 1990s, has shifted CBT theories and, especially practice, towards a more neoliberal-friendly approach of CBT development (see Beeton, 2006:50; Pleumar, 2002). In which case neoliberalism influences CBT development to promote neocolonialism. When managed in a top-down manner (Zapata et. al.,2011:18-19) or dependent on external actors (Manyara and Jones,2007:642) CBT can be linked to neocolonialism. ;

The shift in the interpretation has been present in various forms depending on differences in the level of community control and involvement (see Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, 2012:36; see Calanog et al., 2012:303 for possible models of CBT ventures). The relevance of the issue of control has been already noted. Control defines the scale, nature and speed of the development (Butler and Hinch, 1996 in Sofield, 2003:87). Control and empowerment are directly correlated and if CBT is externally controlled, disempowerment (and not empowerment) is more likely to occur (Scheyvens and Russell, 2012).

It is the level of community independence in the CBT venture and, especially, the type of external support which has been provided which shapes the level and type of community inclusion in the global system or its development and nature of control of the tourism process within a given context. It can be argued that CBT under local community control can ensure community independence and allow the community to decide on the level of stakeholder involvement in the tourism sector. Fundamentally, the understanding of external involvement needs to be addressed including the mediation of an appropriate balance which has to be struck between local control and limited external support and guidance (Nel et al., 2001:3). In such a context, a facilitative approach which allows nuanced development approaches provide the tool to the community for self-development (Giampiccoli, 2007:188; Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, 2012:35). In support of this idea, Ramsa and Mohd, (2004:584) argue that CBT development occurs when communities own and run their tourism ventures from their homes as community based initiatives. In which case, different actors can be seen as facilitators (Scheyvens, 2002:176; Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013:5). There are other factors which come into play in the mosaic of influences such as policy and ideology.

Policy and ideology can influence the modus operandi of external entities in CBT projects. While undertaking participatory research into external participation and the role of intermediaries in CBT, Wearing and Macdonald (2002:203) observe that:

the notions of participatory research are in some instances expressions of hidden agendas and 'normalising' patterns. Some would perhaps call it a current form of neo-colonialism, although the changes in development thought and practice are certainly better in terms of respecting rural and isolated area knowledge. Although development agents and tour operators can definitely be regarded as intermediaries between the rural and isolated area people and the project, we seek to regard the process of community-based tourism planning as a long-term programme of governance to be carried out with and for the community. Instead of viewing tour operators as direct 'intermediaries' in community-based

¹ Some examples of proposed model/terminology are: Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2012), Pinel (1999), Simpson (2008), Honggang et al., (2009), Zapata et al. (2011).

tourism planning, we argue that they should rather be viewed as 'facilitators'– sources of information that eventually can be utilised and transformed into knowledge by the communities themselves.

Connell (1997:257 in Wearing and Macdonald, 2002:204) thus advances that the development agent facilitates rather than initiates, gives ideas and not orders and encourages rather than coercing communities behind what he/she thinks is good for them.

3.3 External influences on CBT at grassroots

This section reflects on how external forces within the global and local frameworks of influences can have impacts on the outcome of CBT projects including locally developed CBT ventures. In fact CBT should organically and autonomously grow within the community.

Using an example from Taquile Island in Lake Titicaca (Perú), these matters can be elucidated. The CBT on Taquile Island in Lake Titicaca was developed by locals at the grassroot level however, it could be said that it was subsequently 'forced' to remodel itself as a consequence of external influences and actors. It has been noted that historically, traditional structures have previously worked in a balanced way and have allowed community-wide involvement. However, external forces and actors have started to fracture this condition, in fact (writing in 2001) Mitchell and Reid, (2001:136) observe diminishing local influence and control as Puno travel agents crowded out locals in the market however they concede that the communities still command collective management of most services especially in the areas of accomodation, handicrafts and the collection of entrance fees.

Mitchell and Reid, (2001:136) also acknowledge the impact of globalisation from which the community of Taquile is not immune to, the incorporation of tourism into the community's life and the tender balance between market forces and community participation which could be fragile in light of all these forces (on similar matters see also . Ypeij and Zorn, 2007)..Critics of CBT, Mitchell and Muckosy (2008:2) observe that collective management was undermining incentives to work as such on Taquile Island in Lake Titicaca, Perú, only four of the 19 tourist boats were operating as cooperatives and only one of 10 restaurants was under community ownership. Mitchell and Muckosy, (2008:2) go on to suggest that that CBT is ineffective in addressing poverty at scale and urges development practitioners to redirect effort at linking poor communities to the mainstream economy rather than insulating them.

It can be deduced that the decrease in community ownership and the change in structure of the historically community-initiated CBT system was, to some extent, jeopardised by external influences and actors through their 'intrusion'. This change is externally driven and does not represent an internal endogenous evolution of the CBT itself. The external milieu and actors, due to power imbalances which work in their favour, their capacities and influences (cultural, political and economic) can easily sway and direct the changes also in their favour. However, strengthening the argument proposed by Williams (1976:205) suggesting that the internal structures of hegemony are complex and can be challenged and even be modified to the extent that the islanders are fighting to regain control of tourism on their island. (Ypeij & Zorn, 2007:119; on the same issues see also Asker et al., 2010:129;).

The influence of external forces and actors on Taquile Island in Lake Titicaca (Perú) is not unique or an isolated case. Another case from the recent past in Ecuador shows similar influences in which a CBT development was hijacked to assume a new approach because of external ideologies and understanding of the underlying conceptualisation of tourism law which negated traditional values (see Drumm, 1998:209). RICANCIE today is still working and with a working website (<http://ricancie.nativeweb.org>).

3.4 Case evidence: Yachana Lodge

Writing about community-based ecotourism (CBE) in Ecuador, Peaty (2007) proposed that a CBE project does not necessarily need to be completely owned and managed by the community to provide community benefits. Peaty (2007:63) observes that some authors (Wesche and Drumm, 1999 in Peaty, 2007:63) see the CBE modelled in a way steeped in community as 'the purest model' of CBE. Peaty (2007) argues that although the preferred CBT model should be the one which is owned and controlled by the community, based on the experiences at the Yachana Lodge, he suggests that various forms of outside management support can make a greater contribution to boosting community-wide benefits compared to benefits possible through local management. However, The Yachana Lodge was externally initiated and funded and while it can leverage community benefits (Peaty, 2007:67, 68). its operations are not community managed.

Since the purchase of land in 1994 and the opening of the first Lodge by FUNEDESIN in 1995 to the actual field work in 2006 by Peaty (2007) – which is about 18 years – the FUNEDESIN foundation and related projects were all

managed by Douglas McMeekin, the initiator, leaving serious doubts about the concept of 'purest model' of CBT in relation to community empowerment. Instead this article argues that this model seems to maintain the community dependent position without real control of the CBT process unfolding and especially, with doubts on the project's capacity to transfer responsibility to community members for the long-term sustainability of the project (as after 18 years the initiator of the project was still in charge of the project).

Yachana Lodge project seems to remain circumscribed and managed within a framework of 'external expertise' and depending on external donor support instead of a self-development process associated with community self-reliance and long-term sustainability. Belsky (1999) also touched on similar issues in which external facilitators, national politics and the interactions between them, control, influence and perspectives guided the development of a community-based rural ecotourism project in Gales Point Matanee in Belize. His (Belsky, 1999) study shows how he puts in doubt the underlying assumption which promotes CBT ecotourism in Gales Point Manatee by asking "in whose interest are they deployed" (Belsky, 1999:648). Belsky mentions that the expatriate team formed a 'cooperative' which did not resemble any local tradition form of institution (Belsky, 1999:651)². At the end, the Gales Point Manatee project presented many problems because of external forces involved and the dynamics of national politics (see Belsky, 1999). Interestingly, Belsky (1999:659, 660) found out that locals were also resisting, criticising, and challenging the notion that they, not foreign operators, were behind the environmental decay in Gales Point, because of poverty and their culture.

The influence of external actors in CBT projects is not unique to the Latin American context. Crosby, (2002:363), in a study related to his 1990-1994 field work in Fiji, observes that there is a schism between an archaeology which places local communities into externally initiated projects and those coming from the community Crosby (2002:369) sees heritage tourism as a diversification strategy. As such the Department of Town and Country Planning in Fiji approved the first archaeology project in 1986 based on vanua and during the 1990s many communities in a politically friendly contexts embarked on community-led archaeology projects. Despite the failure of the first project, several other projects were initiated, paramount amongst these was the one at Bouma. The one in Bouma was unique in that it was started following a request for assistance by local land owners themselves (Crosby, 2002:371) This Bouma was managed differently based on the lesson learnt and errors made in the first project (Crosby, 2002:373). The Bouma National Heritage Park run by the Fiji Visitors Bureau and by independent tour operators has posted some successes which led to the springing up of other projects with initial requests coming from the communities based on different degrees of community agreement and leadership (Crosby, 2002:374). Crosby (2002:375) maintains that, by and large, Community-led and community-operated eco-tourism projects in Fiji seem to address many of the problems afflicting rural Fijian communities in which control has rested at all times with the community with tacit resistance to bureaucratic impositions while protecting the exploitation of local chiefs. Thus, the common denominator in the Fijian projects is that they are initiated by the local community, they are based on local knowledge and values, they have proper external guidance, and external finance are available in recognition of the "contribution to the national economy of sustainable and culturally appropriate development" (Crosby, 2002:375).

3.5 *Shifting the goal posts in Pondoland, South Africa*

More recently, in the South African context, a CBT that was initially locally developed by a local community, a local NGO (PondoCrop) and, funded, by the National Government Agency, which was initially recognised as a good example and flagship model to be expanded, has changed in meaning and outcome as a consequence of international support (Ntshona and Lahiff, 2003:2, 40)³. As a matter of fact it has been noted that the Amadiba Trail project on the Wild Coast changed its face in light of substantial EU funding which exerted pressure to work on commercial lines in pursuit of growth and efficiency with the potential to negate existing livelihood strategies (Ntshona and Lahiff, 2003:41).

The extension of the project has occurred but with a shift in approach in which the lodges which were supposed to be controlled by the community were 'given out' (implementing a partnership agreement with the community) through a tender process to an external company (Giampiccoli, 2010:263). This seems in line with what was proposed by Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2012) in which the moves towards neo-liberalism transpose the outcome of CBT towards more private company partnerships. The case in South Africa is not unique as similar examples abound elsewhere for example, in Kenya. In Kenya, Manyara and Jones (2007:638), suggest that the neo-liberal framework in CBT has been used as a

² The fact that CBT should entail community-wide based structures and benefits does not mean that the model must be imported. The model should follow specific local traditions of community structures in which it should be rooted

³ For details on various aspects of the project see: MTR (2003), Giampiccoli (2010), Wright (2005), Ntshona and Lahiff (2003), Kepe et al., (2001), Russell and Kuiper (2003) and HSSA, (2004).

neo-colonial strategy to tourism development in which priority was given to white investors disregarding the needs of local communities such that the ventures had little impact on poverty reduction; and with donor funding, dependency was reinforced.

4. Discussion

External actors play a role in CBT. However, their role should be supportive of community initiatives if greater benefits are to accrue to the communities in the quest of their own development. Ideally these initiatives must be home-grown, led by the communities to address their own immediate and future needs. The external players should use their experience and skills to give a helping hand while safeguarding control in the hands of communities if the motive is not purely commercial but development.

We posit a framework which we believe can contribute to deliver positive outcomes for community projects which yield community-wide benefits while working with external partners:

Principles for CBT which we advocate include:

4.1 Voluntarism

As external partners engage with communities, because of the wealth of experience and skills which they possess, they should willingly and voluntarily work with communities by providing the helping hand and subsequently handover.

4.2 Mutual learning

By respecting indigenous knowledge systems and bringing their knowledge, there is room for external partners and communities to learn from each other.

4.3 Information sharing

Sharing of accumulated knowledge helps communities as well as external partners to exchange best practice and learn from each other's mistakes. This will ensure that the same mistakes will not be repeated in future in the execution of projects.

4.4 Trust-building

As external partners enter into communities, they have to know the approaches to use when entering these communities. As communities gain confidence in the external partners through sharing of information and working together, trust is built.

4.5 Mutual respect

Respect for each other and respect for each's culture and norms are key ingredients for strong collaborations and partnerships.

4.6 Equality of partners

No partner should assume superiority over the other. All partners should show respect for each other on an equal footing,

4.7 Common cause

Partners should have common causes such as poverty alleviation or entrepreneurship in order to create a common currency between them.

4.8 Independence

Partners should observe and respect each's independence and the right to make choices and decisions.

4.9 Zero tolerance to exploitation

Partners should not tolerate exploitation of one by the other.

4.10 Joint-problem solving

Partners should solve problems together, acknowledging that they all have a common cause.

4.11 Survival and prosperity

Partners should ensure that the projects survive and prosper. It is upon these projects that livelihoods/communities depend. Given the foregoing, it is imperative to know the following with respect to CBT: know your community; your partners/stakeholders; your tourism niche; your client base; your capacity; your capabilities; your environment and resources. These altruistic principles can contribute to have more winners than losers.

5. Conclusion

CBT development has its inherent problems including the potential and capacity to contribute to the development of poor communities CBT should be seen as part of a diversification strategy to community development in which communities do not literally put all their eggs in one basket and as such it should not, especially in the initial stages, be taken as a predominant sector on which development is based. CBT is not isolated from the rest of the global tourism industry and, indeed, the global-local framework. As such CBT remains embedded in the prevailing specific political-economic and social order and, indeed, ideological milieu which circumscribes such global-local influences, which are currently based on neoliberal approaches to development. This same milieu, together with the actors supporting it, interact with CBT development processes which shift CBT understandings and implementation practices. As such, CBT undergoes different levels of dilution from its original meanings and in practice which are linked to alternative development approaches aimed at community self-reliance, holistic development and empowerment. Consequently, CBT is weakened at the expense of the expansion of neoliberalism instead of poor communities which, remain marginalised and trapped in dependency. This article has presented views from various authors regarding influence of external actors against a backdrop of the influence of neoliberalism. It also provided a series of examples based on actual experience, which showed that if CBT is properly implemented it is a workable option and has the capacity to contribute to community development. It recognised that, most often than not, CBT development needs, especially in poorer communities and in the initial stages, an external facilitator or, at least, external entity to facilitate the CBT process. The article also posited principles upon which strong partnerships are built, of voluntarism, mutual learning, information sharing, trust-building, mutual respect and so forth. It is possible to conclude with the perceptive words from Zapata et al. (2011:747), that: "Multiple actions are necessary to eradicate poverty and, under certain circumstances [...], CBT can make a contribution."

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