

TOWARDS COMMUNITY DRIVEN TOURISM PLANNING: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORITICAL DEMANDS AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

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Abstract

This paper outlines the historical context in which 'participatory tourism planning' emerged and links this ideology to the practicality. Key elements of community based planning are summarized. The literature reviewed helps identify several tensions in achieving participatory planning. To move the enquiry forward, it is argued that there is an urgent need for identifying and further examination of five inter-related fundamental issues: (1) who are the affected community or communities? (2) who are tourism stakeholders? (3) who should select stakeholders? (4) who should act as a promoter/convenor of the participatory planning? and (5) what methods should be used to attain effective and efficient public participation.

Key words: Community participation, Tourism planning, Review.

Introduction

Different terms, such as community development, public participation, and community empowerment, are used to denote the involvement of people in local affairs. Although apparently different, these terms are interrelated. Underneath the terminological variations rest the same concepts, conveying similar ideas and entailing similar processes.

Originally rooted in political theories of democracy, the participatory concept evolved into a core agenda for developers, policy makers and planners in the 1970s and 1980s (Jewkes and Murcott 1988). Central to this rationale is a reaction against governmental centralisation, bureaucratisation and rigidity (ibid.). The focal point of the concept is that state power has extended too far, exploiting and diminishing ordinary people's freedom and rights to control their own affairs. Advocates of the concept of participatory tourism planning postulate that, by actively and genuinely involving people in the

development process, attempts to promote economic and social progress would be accelerated. They also believe that the benefits of development will achieve greater equity in distribution. Community participation is thus seen as a useful tool to reduce unbalanced development.

Community participation is premised upon: a voluntary and democratic involvement of people (Strawn, 1994; Butler et al., 1999; Warburton, 1998); grass-roots initiatives, as opposed to an imposition from above (Strawn, 1994; Butler et al., 1999); participants' capability to make choices and influence outcomes (Beeker et al., 1998; Warburton, 1998; Stewart and Collett, 1998); shared decision-making at all levels of the programmes (setting goals, formulating policies, planning, implementing) (Strawn, 1994; Butler et al., 1999); and, equitably-shared benefits from development as a result of participation (Zetter and Hamza, 1998).

To date, attempts at achieving genuine community participation in the tourism field encounter some difficulties; the requirement that all public shareholders be directly involved at

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