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Research Paper

Local perceptions of the relative contributions of enclave tourism and agritourism to community well-being: The case of Mauritius

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ABSTRACT

To date, limited attention has been paid to the contribution of tourism to the well-being of island residents in general and to whether such well-being varies according to the nature of tourism development in particular. Specifically, island tourism is frequently manifested in resort-based enclave development, a form of tourism that is often criticised for its assumed limited benefits to the wider community. As a consequence, alternative approaches such as agritourism, are increasingly proposed as a means of enhancing community development and well-being, yet the relative merits of enclave and agritourism have not been explored within an island tourism context. This paper addresses this notable gap in the literature. Drawing on a questionnaire-based survey in Mauritius, it considers and compares the perceptions of local people of the extent to which enclave tourism and agritourism contribute to their well-being. The results reveal that both types of tourism development contribute both positively and negatively to community well-being although enclave tourism is perceived to have fewer positive outcomes. On the one hand, enclave tourism provides valuable cultural opportunities but damages the environment, restricts entrepreneurship and favours local elites; on the other hand, agritourism, although not yet well-established in Mauritius, is perceived to positively enhance the cultural and social spheres of community life whilst supporting entrepreneurship.

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1. Introduction

Islands, according to Gillis (2007, p. 278), 'have always been viewed as places of sojourn ... from the beginning they were seen as remote liminal places'. Nowadays, the particular allure of islands, manifested in the juxtaposition of their tangible physical, cultural and climatic features with the less tangible characteristics of 'island-ness' (King, 1993; Lockhart, 1997; Conkling, 2007) continues to ensure their popularity amongst tourists. Indeed, it has long been claimed that, collectively, islands represent one of the most visited categories of tourist destination (Marín, 2000). It is not surprising, therefore, that tourism has increasingly become fundamental to the economic growth and development of islands, particularly small island developing states where it has become an 'essential component of... economic development' (Ashe, 2005, p. 5). In other words, the remarkable growth in international tourism since the mid-20th century has coincided with the need for many small islands to restructure their economies away from a

dependence on the production and export of primary commodities (McElroy, 2003). As a consequence, tourism has come to assume a significant role in many island economies (Sharpley, & Ussi, 2014) and it is no coincidence that in 2014 the top 10 countries in which tourism contributed relatively most to GDP were all islands (WTTC, 2015).

It is also not surprising that the development of island tourism has long benefited from significant academic scrutiny (e.g. Bastin, 1984; Conlin, & Baum, 1995; Croes, 2011; Lockhart, Drakakis-Smith, & Schembri, 1993; Graci, & Dodds, 2010; Wilkinson, 1989). Much attention has been paid in particular to the issue of dependency, with many commentators arguing that the 'vulnerabilities' (Briguglio, 1995) of small islands enhance their susceptibility to dependence on the tourism sector. As Scheyvens and Momsen (2008, p. 23) suggest, 'tourism can perpetuate unequal relations of dependency as well as encourage uneven and inequitable socio-economic and spatial development'. Conversely, others have observed that not only are some islands with small populations amongst the wealthiest states in the world in terms of per capita GDP, but also that many islands with significant tourism sectors, particularly those in the Caribbean and Mediterranean, enjoy high average incomes and advanced levels of economic and social development (McElroy, 2006). Hence, there is evidence to

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suggest that, under some circumstances, tourism may indeed be an effective driver of development in island states.

Either way, little attention has been paid specifically to the implications of tourism development for the well-being of the populations of small island states. That is, although recent research has focused on resident perceptions of tourism on community well-being in general (Andereck, & Nyaupane, 2011; Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Moscardo, Kononov, Murphy, & McGehee, 2013), not only are such studies relatively rare but few have considered the contribution of tourism to the well-being of island residents in particular (Nawijn, & Mitas, 2012). Moreover, the extent to which local community well-being varies according to the nature of tourism development has largely been overlooked in island tourism research. In other words, island tourism or, more precisely, warm-water island tourism, is frequently manifested in resort-based enclave development: a form of tourism that is often criticised for its assumed limited benefits to the wider community. Conversely, alternative, sustainable approaches to tourism development on islands are considered to be more beneficial (Carlsen, & Butler, 2011; Graci, & Dodds, 2010). Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to assess the contribution to the well-being of the local community deriving from enclave tourism relative to other, alternative forms of tourism, such as agritourism.

The purpose of this paper is to address this gap in the literature. Based on research in Mauritius, an Indian Ocean island tourism destination widely renowned for its primarily enclave tourism sector, it considers the outcomes of a study that compares the perceptions of the local community of the extent to which enclave tourism and agritourism contribute to their well-being. In so doing, it seeks to identify a number of implications for tourism policy and planning in Mauritius. The first task, however, is to review briefly tourism, development and well-being in the context of enclave tourism and agritourism as a conceptual framework for the research.

2. Island tourism, development and well-being

Tourism has long been favoured as a development option and officially endorsed as such. Indeed, more than three decades ago the World Tourism Organisation claimed that 'World tourism can... ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social development and progress, in particular in developing countries' (WTO, 1980 p. 1) and since then tourism has become fundamental to the development policies of an increasing number of countries and sub-national regions around the world (Lee, & Chang, 2008). The reasons underpinning the adoption of tourism as a development option are well-known. Not least, tourism boasts a record of sustained growth and is, hence, seen as a 'safe' path to follow, although, more specifically, it is its potential to generate and redistribute wealth, contribute to government revenues, stimulate employment and act as a catalyst for wider economic growth and development that justifies its inclusion and prominence in development policies.

Nevertheless, debate continues to surround the developmental benefits or outcomes of tourism for destination communities. That is, as an essentially economic activity, tourism undoubtedly possesses the potential to contribute to the destination economy – although this is not always guaranteed (Blake, 2008; Oh, 2005) – but the extent to which it contributes to wider social development and well-being, particularly in less-developed nations, is less certain. Undoubtedly, tourism has to a lesser or greater extent underpinned the economic development of many destinations, and examples exist of its localised contribution to community well-being (Briedenhann, & Wickens, 2004). Others, however, suggest that there is little empirical evidence of tourism's direct

contribution to developmental goals (Novelli, & Hellwig, 2011) whilst Durberry (2004) suggests that the economic benefits of tourism do not necessarily translate into development more generally.

This is unsurprising, particularly given contemporary understandings of development and well-being. As discussed in detail elsewhere (Sharpley, 2015), development remains a contested concept and one that is best thought of only in relation to the needs or aims of particular societies and the ways in which those societies seek to address their societal challenges (Hettne, 2009). Nevertheless, there is consensus that the meaning of development has evolved over time, from the narrow conceptualisation of being synonymous with economic growth, through being considered a process related to socio-economic progress and distributive justice, to the broader goal of the betterment of the human condition or what is referred to simply as 'human development' (Knuttsen, 2009). Though variously defined, human development is neatly summarised by the UNDP (2010, p. 22) as:

the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; to advance other goals they have reason to value; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet. People are both the beneficiaries and drivers of human development, as individuals and in groups.

Moreover, according to UNDP (2010), human development comprises three key elements, namely well-being, empowerment and agency, and justice. The latter of these includes the expansion of equity, sustaining outcomes over time, and respecting human rights and other goals of society.

Interestingly, although well-being is identified above as an element of human development, it may also be seen for the purposes of this paper as synonymous with human development. It is also equally difficult to define precisely, being both an objective and subjective concept (McCabe, Joldersma, & Li, 2010; Schueller, 2009). On the one hand, objective measurements of well-being include income, education, literacy, life expectancy, access to clean water, housing, healthcare and so on. These, not coincidentally, are commonly applied indicators of human development. On the other hand, well-being is subjective in as much as individual members of a society inject a personal, subjective element into the assessment of their own well-being (Dissart, & Deller, 2000). That is, subjective measurements of well-being 'empower individuals to define their own well-being' (Schueller, 2009, p. 925) and are broadly concerned with factors that contribute to an individual's happiness and satisfaction with life. These may include good health, prosperity and integration into society (McCabe et al., 2010) – conversely, poverty is associated with reduced levels of subjective well-being (Amato, & Zuo, 1992) – and also the extent to which individuals perceive their aspirations to have been met (Diener, 1994). Parallels may therefore also be drawn between subjective well-being and contemporary understandings of human development, distinctions reflecting not what is being assessed but how.

Of particular relevance to this paper, Moscardo et al. (2013) contend that community well-being consists of multiple forms of capital: cultural, social, human, political, natural, financial and built. In other words, for tourism to be contributing to community well-being, it should be contributing to the accumulation of all of these capitals. Hence, an assessment of the relationship between tourism and development should, according to Moscardo et al. (2013), be focused around capitals-defined community well-being which, as the preceding discussion suggests, necessitates an exploration of the community's perceptions of their own well-being.

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