

Tourism and Community Capacity Building: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Tourism as an industry is increasing rapidly in developing countries. Tourism is simultaneously portrayed as a destroyer of culture, undermining social norms and economies, degrading social structures, stripping communities of individuality and as a savior of the poor and disadvantaged, providing opportunities and economic benefits, promoting social exchange and enhancing livelihoods. The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of community capacity building with respect to tourism development. I discuss how the processes of community capacities (individual, organizational and community) and community empowerment draw from and contribute to the physical, social and human capital essential to community based tourism. In this way, I review literature on community capacity building and discuss the related concepts of community capacities, community empowerment and community participation, with particular attention to how they may apply to communitybased tourism. The literature included in this review, draws from experience in a variety of disciplines, namely community psychology, personnel management, natural resource management, sociology and international development.

Key words: Tourism, community empowerment, community capacity building, community participation, community development

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and community development programs have increasingly placed an emphasis on sustainability. In pursuing this direction, the concept of community capacity building has become of particular importance in identifying priorities and opportunities for development (Victurine, 2000). Community capacity building, like community development, describes a process that increases the assets and attributes that a community is able to draw upon in order to improve their lives (Laverack and Thangphet, 2007). Community capacity building therefore, concerns the development of skills and abilities that will enable others to take decisions and actions for themselves. In this study, the decisions and actions of the community are based on their desire to community tourism enterprises. Tourism is therefore, closely linked to sustainable community development. Thus, I attempt to outline the concept of community capacity building to relevant with tourism and to describe the process of constructing a capacity building research tool base on tourism. One way of understanding community capacity building is to locate it on a strategic/tourism developmental continuum. Thus, the purpose of this study is to discuss how the processes of community capacities (individual, organizational and community) and community empowerment contribute to

the physical, social and human capital essential to community based tourism. Based on a review of literature, I define community capacity building, after discussing how this concept has been applied in the literature and practice of various disciplines. I integrate community capacity building with community participation, community empowerment and capital into a conceptual model and illustrating the potential utility of the model for planning and evaluating tourism development.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

There are many definitions of 'community capacity building'. At 'first glance' community capacity building can be viewed as a notion that describes 'community' effort, time, resources, leadership and commitment directed towards 'community' identified goals and change (Fiona, 2007; Mitchell and Macfie, 2004), write, 'Community capacity building' is not a clear concept with an agreed meaning (Fiona, 2007). Community capacity can be seen as the capacity of the people in communities to participate in actions based on community interests, both as individuals and through groups, organizations and networks. Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve

collective problems and improve or maintain the wellbeing of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort. Community capacity building also is community empowerment (Chaskin, 2001). Community capacity building has also been described as 'exciting', 'innovative', 'empowering', 'significant' and 'new'. Proponents of the construct point to emerging research evidence that 'community capacity building' can support community based empowerment and the development of skills, knowledge and resources, strengthened social relations, support health gains and stronger links between policy environments/communities/organizations. In the words of (Chapman and Kirk, 2001; Fiona, 2007), it can promote the preconditions for 'community development in the long term' Community capacity building describes a more generic increase in community groups' abilities to assess and analyze any concerns of importance to their members (Labonte and Laverack). Labonte and Laverack (2001a, b) defined community capacity building as the increase in the abilities of community groups to define, assess, analyze and act on issues and concerns of importance to their members (Chaskin *et al.*, 2001). Used it to refer the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve and maintain the well-being of that community. However, when community capacity building is poorly defined it has been suggested that this perhaps reflects the confusion about whether community capacity building can be viewed as a distinctive process or whether, it is simply community development by another name (Gibbon *et al.*, 2002; Schuftan, 1996).

Other study that attempted to clarify the distinction between community capacity building and other approaches to community development was based on research conducted in the David Thompson Health Region, Canada. Community capacity building was defined as the extent to which a community can generate, implement and sustain actions for strengthening community health (Smith *et al.*, 2001). Despite the volume of literature about community capacity building, there are relatively few definitions (Smith *et al.*, 2001), define it as a process of working with a community to determine what its needs and strengths are and to develop ways of using those strengths to meet those needs. Community capacity can be defined as the characteristics of a community that enable it to mobilize, identify and solve community problems. Community capacity has been said to be the community's ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future

(Fawcett *et al.*, 1995). Several definitions for community capacity building such as, Improve the ability of individuals, organizations, businesses and governments in their community to come together, learn, make well-reasoned decisions about the community's present and future and to research together to carry out those decisions. Some definitions focus on the existence of commitment, skills, resources and problem solving abilities of the community, often as these are connected to a particular program or institution (Goodman *et al.*, 1998).

Recently, Chaskin *et al.* (2001) gives a very useful concept of community building at the local level that is considered as the basis for organizing the remainder of the discussion of the conceptual framework for this study, provided an overview of different definitions of community capacity building from other authors as well as from their research practice. They provided a very useful definition, which is community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well being of that community. It may operate through informal social processes and organized efforts by individuals, organizations and social networks that exist among them and between them and the larger systems of which the community is a part (Chaskin *et al.*, 2001).

Community capacity involves identifying the capacities of communities, to enable them to support their own needs and aspirations. A comprehensive definition of community capacity building is that articulated by Goodman *et al.* (1998). It is a process as well as an outcome, it includes supportive organizational structures and processes, it is multi-dimensional and ecological in operating at the individual, group, organizational, community and policy levels (our understanding of community is that it encompasses all these sectors) and it is context specific (Goodman *et al.*, 1998; Fiona, 2007; Labonte and Laverack, 2001b), indicate that community capacity building has both constitutive elements, ends in themselves and instrumental ones that is, means to an end. Rather than attempting to resolve this dialectic, they choose to take a path recognizing the confluence of these ideas. Thus, they identify as capacity, those elements of peoples' day-to-day relationships, conditioned and constrained by economic and political practices that are important determinants of the quality of their lives, if not also of communities' healthy functioning. Thus, an understanding of community capacity building incorporates the ideas that it is both a means, or a process

and an end that achieves a purpose such as achieving health gains or meeting needs. Labonte and Laverack (2001a, b), call attention to the link between individual and community, a link found to be relevant in this study. Community capacity and capacity building are closely associated terms (Bopp *et al.*, 2000) define community, capacity to mean the ability of people and communities to do the work needed in order to address the determinants of health for those people in that place. Smith *et al.* (2001) define it as the degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions for strengthening community. Common to all definitions of community capacity is a focus on processes of action and relationship to effect change towards the end of improved health in communities. There is considerable overlap between the terms community capacity and capacity building. Labonte and Laverack (2001a, b) focus their research particularly on community capacity building. They describe community capacity building as an increase in community groups abilities to define, access, analyze and act on any concerns of importance to their members. Labonte *et al.* (2002) say that community capacity building, like the related concepts of community development and empowerment, is about increasing the capabilities of people to articulate and address community issues and to overcome barriers to achieve improved outcomes in the quality of their life.

TOURISM FOR COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Community capacity building has been cited as both a process and an outcome goal in reference to the community participation in tourism decision-making processes (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). However, no specific definition has been given for community capacity building focused on stakeholders or communities with respect to tourism. We can trace the concept of community capacity building to both theoretical and applied research (Mengers, 2000). Many discussions of community capacity building lack specific definition of the term and the literature exhibits no convention in definitions between the various disciplines, or even within them (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). Nevertheless, the importance of community capacity building in some fields such as tourism is evident (Ohiorhenuan and Wunker, 1995). The term seems to have implicit meaning that is assumed to be generally understood. The present-continuous tense of capacity building suggests that it is a long-term and continuous process (Ohiorhenuan and Wunker, 1995).

From this analytic perspective, community capacity building is used in three major contexts and can be categorized.

Organizational: Referring to a community organization or set of local organizations (e.g., local tourism management agency, local government).

Community: Referring to informal groups bounded geographically (e.g., town, neighborhood).

Individual: Referring to people as such (i.e., community citizens).

These capacities, after being gained by the institution, community, or individual, may remain dormant unless there is some impetus to action, or empowerment (Rappaport, 1987). That is, capacities of individuals, groups, or organizations may go unrecognized, unvalued, or unexercised. Through a process of empowerment, these capacities may contribute to sustained and meaningful action or participation (Rappaport, 1981). Thus, empowerment plays a central role in community-based tourism. The three types of community capacities may overlap, but for this study they will be considered separate categories. To illustrate how concepts of community capacity, community empowerment, community participation and capital interconnect and apply to tourism, I rely on visual conceptualizations. The depictions that follow are simple models that do not precisely represent the intricacies and complexities of reality, but serve to illustrate the relationships of the tourism and capacity building and to help consider their application in community development.

Community Participation in general (Wondelleck and Yaffee, 2000) and community capacity building more specifically (Balcazar *et al.*, 2001) lead to community empowerment. In the case of Organizational capacity (Fig. 1), this community empowerment contributes to two traits of the community organization: the empowered community organization and the empowering community organization. To illustrate, a tourism community organization may invest physical capital in the training of key staff in community organization, a form of institutional community capacity. The resulting increase in communication capacity may motivate the local tourism organization to communicate better with its partners or to communicate its message to stakeholders or local people more effectively (empowered local tourism organization). Increased communication effectiveness may also enable the tourism organization to encourage successfully more community participation of citizens or groups in the deliberative decision-making process necessary for

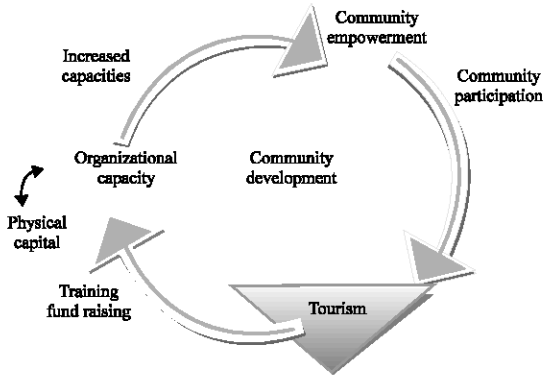


Fig. 1: Cycle of organizational capacity, empowerment and participation

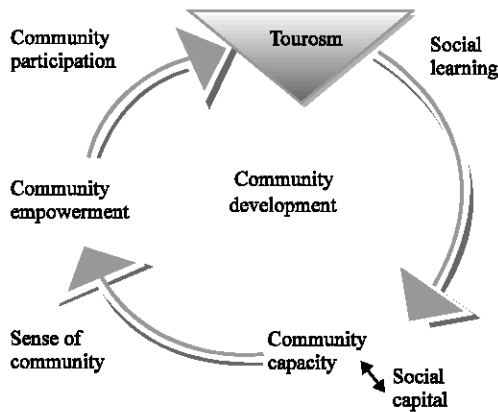


Fig. 2: Cycle of community capacity, empowerment and participation



Fig. 3: Cycle of individual capacity, empowerment and participation

tourism planning (empowering community organization). Both forms of community empowerment can stimulate collaborative action. As Fig. 2 illustrates, tourism is a

cyclical process that contribute to the community capacity building, the process has a reinforcing character that provides opportunities for increasing community capacity building, which leads to community empowerment.

Increased individual capacity result in individual and community empowerment, knowledge and skills foster an individual's confidence and feelings of competence to participate in collaborative action (Fig. 3). Individual empowerment leads to continued and genuine community participation in the tourism process. The individual's sense of ownership, community, common purpose and competence instills commitment to the process. As this cycle plays out repeatedly, increased individual capacities add to the repository of human capital toward capacity building.

In considering, the application of tourism in community capacity building, the role of the developers (e.g., tourism organization staff) deserves consideration. An developers frequently plays the role of third party in public organizing efforts (Rogers, 1990). An individual or a group can fill this role. Important goals of stockholders with respect to community capacity building in community-based tourism would include facilitating the deliberation process, creating relationships among participants, encouraging learning and developing leadership skills in local community people involved in the process. Figure 4 illustrates a conceptual model for how the three cycles of community capacity building relate to a tourism process. In this model, it is the interventionist who facilitates the training, collaboration, social learning and experiences that are the vectors between tourism and increased community capacity building.

In addition, the participators seeks to create the conditions that lead to the development of empowerment (Rappaport, 1987). For instance, participators, in collaboration with community members, may work to create relationships, enabling people to realize that their personal values are shared by others and empowering them to act on those values. The participators may also facilitate the transition from community empowerment to action or community participation in a collaborative process. For instance, the participators may, in some cases, create partnerships, purpose or leadership that motivates collaborative actions.

Figure 5 illustrates three components of community capacity building which have impact in tourism development. This necessitates improving three community capacities to achieving tourism development and therefore, community development.

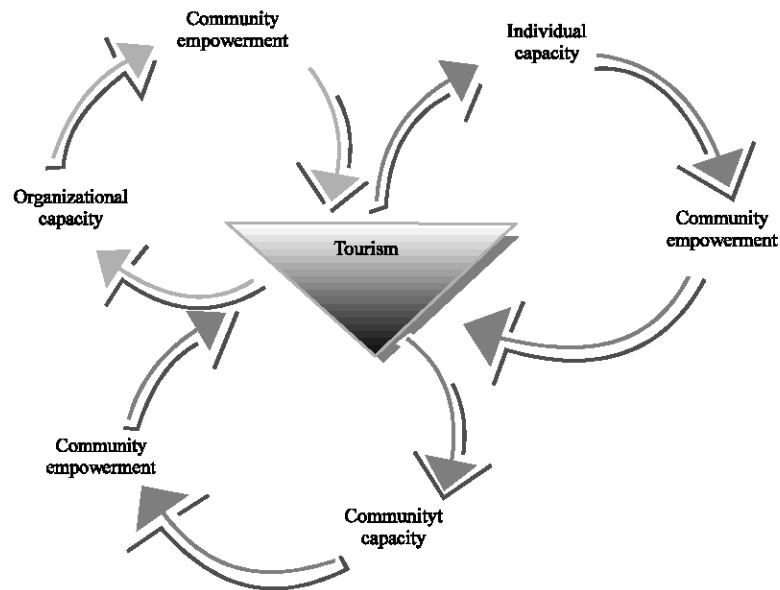


Fig. 4: Interaction between tourism, community capacity, community empowerment and community participation

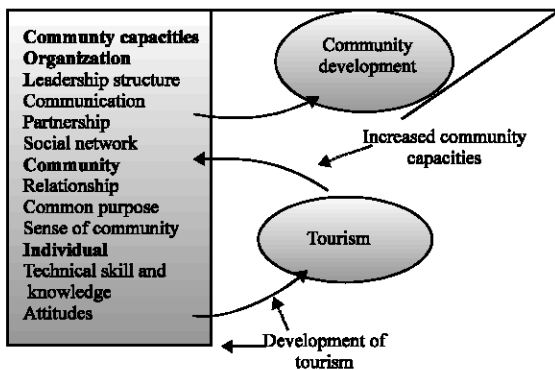


Fig. 5: Interaction between tourism and community development with community capacity building as a mediator

As a result, community capacities increased because of tourism development. In sum, community capacity building is as a mediator for community development and tourism.

CONCLUSION

Tourism presents an opportunity for local people work collaboratively with communities to manage tourism effectively. Community participation also presents a challenge to tourism development, as it often requires an investment of time and energy to build the community capacities of individuals, communities and institutions to understand and respond to a given tourism problem.

We expect that community capacity building will become a central component of tourism development. It is a valuable goal to strive for in its own right, as it allows citizens to engage fully in our collective political and community life. This review revealed the relevance of the process of community capacity building, community empowerment and community participation for tourism development and community development based on tourism. The success of community development-based on tourism requires that all stakeholders understand that investments in community capacities likely are necessary to ensure sustained community participation in tourism management over time.

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