

Promotion of Social Inclusion through New Steps in Tourism

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Abstract: Social inclusion is one of the interesting topics of our times, taking attention in both political realm and scientific inquiry. For instance, social inclusion is considered among the main goals of rural development programmes (Shortall, 2008), within the mega-events such as Vancouver Olympics in 2010 (Vanwynsberghe et. al., 2013), related to maintaining mental health (Repper & Perkins, 2003) and even subject to transportation policies (Pagliara & Biggiero, 2017). By definition, social inclusion is about making sure all individuals are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of the society on the basis of five principles: valued recognition, human development, involvement and engagement, proximity and material well-being (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Social inclusion plays a key role in creating a stable social order premised on social action; however it is dependent on the openness of political structures in a country (Shortall, 2008).

Keywords: Social inclusion; human development; rural development programmes; maintaining mental health

JEL Classification: Z32

1. Introduction

Social inclusion is a fundamentally important issue for social peace as well as peace at a global scale, hence taking attention in both political realm and scientific inquiry. For instance, social inclusion is considered among the main goals of rural development programmes (Shortall, 2008), within the mega-events such as Vancouver Olympics in 2010 (Vanwynsberghe et. al., 2013), related to maintaining mental health (Repper & Perkins, 2003) and even subject to transportation policies (Pagliara & Biggiero, 2017). By definition, social inclusion is about making sure all individuals are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of the society on the basis of five principles: valued recognition, human

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development, involvement and engagement, proximity and material well-being (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002). Social inclusion plays a key role in creating a stable social order premised on social action; however it is dependent on the openness of political structures in a country (Shortall, 2008).

Tourism on the other hand is capable of providing opportunities to promote social inclusion by extending limited social realms, facilitating social interaction and networks and “reaffirming self and developing a new identity in later years” (Grant & Kluge, 2012:130). Previous studies have investigated the participation of low income families and socially excluded groups in tourism. These studies have demonstrated that tourism have a positive impact on disadvantaged groups including low-income families, women (especially mothers) and people with health problems and disabilities (Gump & Matthews, 2000; McConkey & McCullough, 2006, McCabe, 2009; Hunter-Jones, 2010; McCabe, et. al., 2010; Morgan et. al., 2015).

However there is a limited literature for the social inclusion of these disadvantaged groups in the face of the developments in tourism as a sector and their participation into society as a part of, for instance, labor force after some creative steps taken by stakeholders, local authorities or governments. Since creative tourism requires an interaction between tourists and service providers, social inclusion of disadvantaged groups within an area may be enhanced through creative tourism.

In this paper, the main investigation will be the impact of new applications in tourism on the promotion of social inclusion. To do so, this manuscript will first discuss the economic transformation and its reflections on the tourism sector. As neoliberal shift favors private entrepreneurship rather than public service provision, social inclusion and its relationship with modern economic aspects such as employment, self-improvement and skills development will be taken into consideration. After the discussion on economic transformation within the tourism sector, the opposite term of social inclusion (i.e. social exclusion) will be the focus of analysis and the impact of the failure of achieving social inclusion on the well-being of society will be discussed. Next, a suggested model will be presented in order to depict the impact of tourism on social inclusion policies in a quantitative manner. Finally, concluding remarks will be mentioned and it will be claimed that tourism facilitates an opportunity for the participation of people from different segments into social life in a given destination. By doing so, it is one of the basis to achieve both social and world peace.

1.1. Methodology

The methodology used in this manuscript will be centered on a literature review, targeting to evaluate previous studies conducted on the relationship between the development of tourism sector and social inclusion. Considering the body of

literature, a model reflecting this relationship will be developed and the impact on social inclusion will be discussed accordingly.

2. Economic Transformation within the Tourism Sector

Commodification of nature is the recent phenomenon which refers to the privatization of previously public spaces in order to use these spaces in a marketable form (Heynen & Robbins, 2005) and in an efficient manner. The commodification of nature entails various different and often contradictory processes such as privatization, marketization, deregulation, reregulation, liberalization, competitiveness, etc. (Birch et. al., 2010). Parallel to the trend of neoliberalization of nature, people begin to own natural environments such as beaches, coasts, forests, and even mountains, and they invest in these geographical elements in order to use them for touristic purposes. Since neoliberalization has been understood as a process rather than neoliberalism as a thing (Heynen & Robbins, 2005) throughout the shift in the economy since the beginning of 1970s, tourism has emerged as an activity of waged employees for making use of their leisure time in recently privatized public spaces.

Proliferation of more institutionally diffused public-private partnerships than ever, especially after the neoliberal shift from public service provision to private sector entrepreneurialism, as mentioned, is a necessary condition for social inclusion. In this regard, individual employability is now considered as the main target of social inclusion policies (Vanwynsberghe et. al., 2013). As long as local people of a particular destination can involve in the economic activities as service providers, regardless of being a stakeholder or not, promotion of social inclusion becomes possible. Recent studies claim that the major contributors of the promotion of social inclusion can be listed as employment, self-improvement and skills development. Entrepreneurial activities are subject to providing employment for those living in the destination where the investments have been made. Social inclusion includes the cultivation of entrepreneurial subjects within a touristic destination by job-training and employment. When these demands are satisfied, they lead to a decrease in other social issues such as housing problems and addictions (Vanwynsberghe et. al., 2013). The key to social inclusion is participation (Shortall, 2008). Therefore, local people find a chance to involve in economic life may also benefit from social inclusion, since economic power is an important aspect for the involvement of people to their social surroundings.

Furthermore, as Bridge (2009) argues resources have become political constructs. For instance, people in a particular destination could benefit from a beach free of charge. However, after this beach is privatized, they will probably pay an entrance fee to use that beach, since it does no longer belong to public space, but rather it has become a private land of an entrepreneur. Although this enterprise provides

employment for several people, local people who cannot afford to pay for these services can no longer benefit from this natural environment. On the other hand, privatization allow people from outside of this destination to come to that place as tourists if this enterprise can also provide them accommodation or if it is able to market its own natural beauties, which are actually do not belong to this enterprise at the beginning.

Hence, neoliberalization process has resulted in the commodification of nature and therefore has opened a space for the development of tourism sector. As private sector entrepreneurship takes place of public service provision, social inclusion policies include the concepts such as employment and skill development. Moreover, considerations with respect to the sustainability of these entrepreneurial activities renders the emergence of international organizations, however this topic exceeds the scope of this manuscript.

3. The Adverse Impact of Social Exclusion

Having discussed the economic transformation regarding to tourism sector, the focus of analysis may be shifted to the absence of social inclusion and its influence. Social exclusion can be defined as “the lack of access to, or denial of, a range of citizen rights, such as adequate health care or educational possibilities, and also lack of societal integration, through limited power, or the ability to participate in political decision-making” (Shortall, 2008:451). In sociological terms, social exclusion stems from the escalation of social inequalities and leads to an opposition between those who are deprived of resources and capabilities to mobilize these resources and those who are able to mobilize their resources towards a complete social participation (Kastenholz et. al., 2015) which is key to social inclusion as mentioned in the previous part.

Since classificatory struggles produce discourses which determines the eminence and specifies which activity is appropriate in a given condition, social exclusion is commonplace in the tourist enclaves where undesirable elements and social practices are prevented (Edensor, 2000). Especially in urban landscapes where heritage is an integral part, aesthetic appreciation of specific landscape styles and consumption patterns can be subtly defined and redefined in order to exclude the others (Mordue, 2005). Thus, an inclination of social exclusion is observable in touristic destinations and local authorities collaborated with local stakeholders and government bodies should consider about precautionary policies to maintain the social order.

Similar to social inclusion, social exclusion is related to political matters. People from different social or political backgrounds will experience different levels of social inclusion or social exclusion. Nevertheless, political differences can be

successfully manipulated on behalf of the destinations if planners decide and market it strategically. For instance, the use of ethnicity as a resource in tourism rather than “othering” ethnic minorities is the feature of Sáminess in Finnish Lapland tourism promotion (Niskala, M., & Ridanpää, 2016). The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union and Finland has given the indigenous status of the Sámi constitutionally since 1995. Through obtaining their legal rights to develop their own language, culture and traditional livelihoods as well as their maintaining their traditional activities such as reindeer-herding, fishing, hunting, small-scale agriculture, gathering and making handicrafts, Finnish Lapland offers tourists the possibility to experience Sámi culture in this protected area (Niskala, M., & Ridanpää, 2016). Eventually, Sámi culture has become one of the prominent and distinctive cultures which receives attention from all over the world.

On the other hand, social exclusion may cause equilibrium where the excluded individuals refrain from remunerative economic activities (Afridi et. al., 2015). As in the case of China’s housing registration (hukou) system, which categorizes the citizens into urban (non-agricultural) or rural (agricultural) residents of a specific location. Plus, urban residents in this destination are favored in numerous ways, such as resource allocation, employment opportunities, and even eligibility for ration stamps which guarantee subsidized products compared to rural residents and migrants (Afridi et. al., 2015). Thus, social exclusion results in economic loss as well as giving a psychological distress for those who experience such exclusions.

4. Model

Considering the points related to the economic transformation after the neoliberal shift and impacts of social exclusion, the arrangements in tourism sector will clearly have an influence on social inclusion levels or policies. As discussed, the level of tourism investments is a determinant factor for the impact of social inclusion. Moreover, technological progress positively influences the impact of social inclusion by increasing the information network necessary to overcome with social exclusion in a given destination. On the other hand, neoliberalization of nature has a cost on the impact of social inclusion, since it influences the sustainability of nature at an extent.

Hence our model can be considered as:

$$(1) \quad SI = \beta_0 + \beta_1.TI + \beta_2.(TP)^t - ND^t + \varepsilon$$

where,

SI implies the *impact of Social Inclusion*

TI implies *Tourism Investment*

TP implies *Technological Progress*

t implies *Time*

ND implies *Natural Drawback due to neoliberalization of nature*

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2$ and β_3 imply coefficients, and

ε implies residual (i.e. the effect of other variables).

In general, social inclusion is dependent on three main variables, namely tourism investment, technological progress and the natural drawback. To begin with the tourism investments, they provide employment opportunities in a particular destination. Parallel to the advancements in economic well-being, people are more likely to engage in social activities and social inclusion becomes possible, if it is not a policy of authorities. Hence, social inclusion relies on the economic transformation, i.e. commodification of nature as well as investments in tourism sector.

Secondly, technological progress is an important aspect which has a direct influence on the impact of social inclusion. Improvements in technology lead to the emergence of social spaces where people may involve social activities. Moreover, technological advancements increase the efficiency of information networks which allow people interact with each other. For instance, people may search for job opportunities online or can be notified about particular events, which, in the absence of internet, was not possible in previous times. Technological progress is subject to time variable, since technology has the characteristics of growing exponentially such that it has acceleration for doubling itself. This phenomenon is known as Moore's Law named after the work of Gordon Moore (1965) on integrated circuits.

Third, natural drawback has a degrading effect on social inclusion due to environmental issues. Although both local governments and international organizations involve in precautionary policies regarding to environmental sustainability, commodification of nature cause environmental problems such as pollution, waste disposal, urban sprawl and so on which influence the physical and psychological health of people living in a specific destination. These impacts on health decrease the quality of life of people while forming a category by which people may be socially excluded even further. The natural drawback is also subject to time variable, since environmental depletion exponentially grows as well.

Lastly, there may be other variables that can explain the variance in the level of social inclusion that this model has not captured. For that reason, a residual is presented in the model, which denotes the variance that cannot be explained by the three main variables.

5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, impact of social inclusion can be explained on the basis of three major aspects such that tourism investments, technological progress and natural drawback due to the commodification of nature. Since the neoliberal shift has influenced the mechanisms within the economy, previously public spheres have been commoditized and establishment of private service provision has taken place. Although the commodification provides employment for people in a destination as a form of tourism investment, it leads to natural disease and environmental degradation, causing harm for the impact of social inclusion.

Yet, there are still weak points regarding to the model. For instance, the impact of this model has not been confirmed by practical results. Therefore, the model suggested in this paper has drawbacks with respect to real world phenomena. Furthermore, a deeper analysis is required in order to capture the direct impact of technological progress on social inclusion. The relationship presented in the model is only an assumption based on observances and interpretations.

All in all, social exclusion results in adverse impact on social order, therefore policies centered on social inclusion should be enhanced. For this reason, local governments should work collaboratively with international organizations in order to enhance the economic well-being of people in a particular destination through the emergence of tourism industry in previous public spaces.

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