Promises and pitfalls of ecotourism: patterns from a literature review

Las promesas y los escollos del ecoturismo, patrones de una revisión bibliográfica

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism theoretically consists of responsible travel to natural areas that confers environmental and social benefits. Despite those positive aims, there has been a scholar emphasis on the uneven results of ecotourism development, highlighting the gaps between its promised and observed outcomes. A growing number of academics assigns those failures to the capitalist nature of ecotourism and its role in sustaining neoliberalism expansion. They are calling for more research on this relationship, which this study is concerned with. The aim of the present paper is to understand and identify mechanisms preventing a fair and even application of ecotourism principles. In order to do so, case studies issued from the literature review have been selected and a cross-case study search for pattern methodology has been conducted, helping to assess ecotourism development in different contexts and scales as to identify common obstacles to the achievement of positive outcomes. According to the results, patterns of ecotourism implementation are intertwined with neoliberal policies and practices and follow three main mechanisms: 1) extension of neoliberal governance to the detriment of local population self-determination, 2) modification of local culture towards market-driven logics and 3) increased neoliberalization of nature under the form of commodification. In turn, those mechanisms ensue the studied negative social, political and environmental effects. To reduce those, locals should be empowered towards the decision to enter ecotourism and the way to conduct it, excluding dependency on external actors to avoid neoliberal hegemony.

Keywords: neoliberal governance; cultural hegemony; nature neoliberalization; ecotourism development.

RESUMEN

El ecoturismo teóricamente es aquel turismo en que el viaje se realiza de forma responsable a áreas naturales, lo que puede producir beneficios ambientales y sociales donde se realiza la actividad. Sin embargo, desde el ámbito académico se han realizado múltiples investigaciones que cuestionan esos supuestos beneficios y señalan los desiguales resultados asociados al ecoturismo. En ese sentido, dichos trabajos destacan la brecha existente entre unos resultados

prometidos por el ecoturismo y los concretos resultantes de los proyectos ecoturísticos. Un número creciente de autores achaca dicha brecha a la naturaleza capitalista del ecoturismo y a su papel en el sostenimiento de la expansión del neoliberalismo. Es por ello que desde la academia se reclama más investigación sobre esta relación. Así, el objetivo de esta investigación es precisamente arrojar algo de luz sobre este tema, para lo que es necesario comprender e identificar los mecanismos que impiden la aplicación justa y equitativa de los principios del ecoturismo. Para ello, se lleva a cabo un estudio de diversos casos de estudio extraídos de la revisión bibliográfica, lo que permite evaluar y valorar el desarrollo ecoturístico en diferentes contextos y escalas, así como identificar obstáculos comunes. Los resultados confirman que parte de los impactos negativos derivados del desarrollo ecoturístico se deben a su vinculación con las políticas y prácticas neoliberales, con el desencadenamiento de los siguientes mecanismos: 1) extensión de la gobernanza neoliberal en detrimento de la autodeterminación de las comunidades locales, 2) modificación de la cultura local hacia lógicas de mercado y 3) la neoliberalización de la naturaleza bajo la forma de mercancía. Estos mecanismos a su vez, dan lugar a efectos sociales, políticos y ambientales negativos. Para reducir tales efectos, la población local debería empoderarse y ser capaz de decidir sobre la implantación o no del ecoturismo, excluyendo la dependencia respecto de los actores externos para evitar la hegemonía neoliberal.

Palabras claves: gobernancia neoliberal; hegemonía cultural; neoliberalización de la naturaleza; desarrollo ecoturístico.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism has grown in popularity to the point of being the most rapidly expanding sector of the tourism industry (Honey, 2008). It is described by The International Ecotourism Society as: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism is presented as a solution to the derive of mass tourism as it requires less constructed areas and can focus in beneficiating local communities and enhancing the conservation of natural areas and their biodiversity (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). The United Nation General Assembly, in a 2014 report, emphasizes the role of ecotourism as a tool for poverty eradication and environmental protection (UNGA, 2015), especially in developing countries, and underlines the role of tourism as a strategic sector, inviting international and national financial institutions, as well as the UN system, to invest in ecotourism (UNWTO, 2017). Thus, ecotourism has been heavily promoted in the recent years by a wide range of actors including transnational organizations, financial institutions, national governments, non-governmental organizations, professionals, researchers and is becoming an increasingly popular strategy (Fletcher and Neves, 2012). Thanks to the discourse of its advocates, ecotourism is conventionally understood as a fundamentally positive concept and practice, often linked with conservation purpose by creating natural reserves, going from extraction use to visit use, and educating people to preserve their environment (Ávila-García et al., 2012). It is described as a way to empower local residents, provide them with education, employment and income opportunities while giving guests the chance to educate themselves, reconnect with nature and discover new cultures (UNWTO, 2017). As such, discourse analysis of ecotourism promotion

tends to demonstrate that ecotourism is promoted as the panacea to many problems, without revealing much of its potential downsides and thus, is hard to criticize (Duffy, 2015).

However, despite the apparently admirable aims of ecotourism, its application on the field seems to give different results than those claimed (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). As Duffy states, "the promotion of these positive outcomes can mask the complexity of power relations produced by a commitment to ecotourism" (2008, p.2). Many researchers are describing and analyzing effects of ecotourism that are very far from marketed goals and practices, such as environmental depletion, growth in power and socio-economic inequalities, social unrest, lack of local governance and decision power for local population, loss over control of land and resources, just to a cite a few (Ávila-García et al., 2012; Duffy, 2015; León, 2007; Lucas & Kirit, 2009; Fletcher and Neves, 2012; Gascón, 2011; Mowforth and Munt, 2015; Nyaupane et al. 2006). Even cases presented as references for "good practices" by the tourism industry are criticized by Gascón (2013) and Goodwin & Santilli (2009) as being unstable overtime and possibly leading to unsuccessful development. Thus, there is an urgent need to understand where lies the gap between the marketed goals and the reality of ecotourism as to rectify its outcomes. This is what this paper is concerned with: understanding the mechanisms that hinder the application of the ecotourism principles by establishing common patterns based on the review of bibliographic sources, including the analysis of four case studies to be compared. The paper will introduce the literature review before going into more depth into the methodology, the analysis and the results, presenting the latter in three subchapters, each corresponding to one of the main identified mechanisms. Managerial implications are mentioned in the conclusion.

II. NATURE OF ECOTOURISM

An offered approach to the uneven results of ecotourism in the fields of sustainability, conservation and economic development, consists in replacing nature-based tourism in the actual leading debate in social sciences about the character and impacts of the expansion of neoliberalism (Duffy, 2008, p.2). In addition, Bramwell (2011) suggests that the governance and power relationships of the tourism industry could be better understood if contextualized in the social debate about neoliberalism. Indeed, various researchers have been able to link the observed negative impacts of ecotourism development in different contexts and scales to its intertwinement with neoliberal practices (Ávila-García et al., 2012; Cañada, 2010; Duffy, 2008, 2015; Fletcher & Neves, 2012; Gascón, 2011, 2013; Hof & Blázquez-Salom, 2015; Mowforth & Munt, 2015; Rytteri & Puhakka, 2012; Van Noorloos, 2011). In consequence, it is fundamental to understand the nature of ecotourism relationships with neoliberalism, and neoliberalism itself, to better analyze the outcomes of ecotourism and later shift towards strong sustainability practices (Fletcher, 2016).

The relationship of a particular form of tourism (ecotourism) with a variant of capitalism (neoliberalism) can be understood by taking their original dialectic as a starting point and then refine on their actual form. The size and spectacular growth of tourism industry led scholars to reflect on the nature of tourism and its role within the capitalist economy. Tourism was identified by Britton (1991) as an important mean by which capital accumulation can be

undertaken but also by which to resolve the contradictions inherent to capitalism (Fletcher, 2011). As underlined by Marx (1973, in Fletcher & Neves 2012), the first contradiction of capitalism lies within the fact that capitalists are retaining labor surplus value, hindering the working class to reabsorb in turn the production, hence leading to a crisis of overaccumulation. This is the so-called "first contradiction" of capitalism. Another contradiction identified by O'connor (1998, in Castree, 2008a) lies in the necessity for capitalism to extract wealth indefinitely within finite resources. As firms are using biophysical world simultaneously as a source for extraction, as a mean of production and as a sink where to externalize their costs, O'Connor predicted ecological crisis inherent to the capitalist system and its paradoxes. Both contradictions can be concealed through the form of tourism and more particularly ecotourism, as those industries allow the accumulated capital to be transformed into new sources of profitable production through series of interrelated "fixes" (Fletcher, 2016). Castree explains that "fraction of capital faces the continuous challenge of achieving and then sustaining capital accumulation in the face of countervailing forces that are internal and external to the capitalist system" (2008a, p.146). Solving strategically this challenge is a core objective for capital that is named "fix". However, contradictions are not structurally overcome but transformed into new marketable commodities that will also need "fixes" at one point or another, leading the system to ultimately face its own paradoxes and "to essentially cannibalize it-self" (Fletcher, 2016, p.22). Fixes intrinsic to tourism industry help to avoid capitalism system collapse, and ecotourism allows harnessing the finiteness of resources by selling their scarcity as a new venture to accumulation (Fletcher & Neves, 2012; Fletcher, 2016).

Traditional ways by which capitalism solves its overaccumulation crises take the form of "temporal fix" (investment in long-term capital projects) or "spatial fix" (opening of new markets and resources elsewhere) or a combination of both: "spatio-temporal fix" (Harvey, 2003, p.64). Those processes are facilitated by the spatio-temporal compression the world is under, led partly by innovation on transports and communication, helping more flexible forms of investments to take place (Harvey, 1989, p.264). In addition, ecotourism in particular has been established as producing further solutions to the intrinsic problems of capitalism (Fletcher & Neves, 2012). Capitalism development leading to inequalities, ecotourism provides an opportunity to redress these inequalities by charging a higher price to leverage poverty in local communities ("social fix"). It also gives the opportunity to commodify nature, harnessing even its own degradation as a source of income ("environmental fix"). Castree identifies four kinds of environmental fixes: 1) Solving economy-environment contradiction by bringing the latter more fully within the universe of capital accumulation 2) Making the non-human world a mean to the end of capital accumulation 3) Yielding profits through the degradation of non-human world 4) Off-loading responsibilities to private sector and/or adopting a minimal state approach stance. (2008a, pp.147-149). Ecotourism also provides an endless revenue stream through experiences to be purchased anew again and again: ecotourists are marketed and sold a specific experience, which will not be totally fulfilling, thus creating the desire to repurchase it ("bodily fix") (Duffy, 2015; Fletcher & Neves, 2012). Finally, as capitalism has become an ideology affecting and affected by the cultural, social, psychological aspects of the human being as well as political, ecological and of course, economic sphere of its organization (Bakker, 2010; Appleby, 2010), ecotourism allows for people to disconnect from the increasingly rational and

ordered society induced by capitalism and reconnect with their origin -nature- as to experiment enchantment and mystery by purchasing a nature-based travel ("psychological fix")[1].

However, capitalism isn't homogenous in it-self (Fletcher, 2011), and following the main aims of wealth creation and capital accumulation, it has been through various variants overtime, taking more recently the form of neoliberalism (Fletcher and Neves, 2012). Harvey (2007) sees neoliberalism as a project to restore class dominance through a decrease of institutional power and an increase of its legitimization through discourse building. For Duffy, neoliberalism can be defined as being "a process by which market-based regulation is expanded, the role of the state is reduced, and a complex array of public-private networks operate together to neoliberalize nature (…)" (2008, p.3). She argued that nature-based tourism "has expanded and deepend neoliberalism, allowing it to extend neoliberal logics to a greater range of non-human biophysical phenomena" (2015, p.529). Mosedale (2016) contends that tourism is driven by neoliberal logics and exemplifies the characteristics of neoliberalism pinpointed by Castree (2008) that further expand neoliberal logics in relation to tourism. Those are: privatization of assets, increased commercialization of public sector, creation of new markets, deregulation, reregulation, implementation of flanking mechanisms to counteract the effect of neoliberalism and focus on self-sufficient individuals. The flanking mechanisms referred to can be understood within tourism industry as social tourism (Mosendale, 2016) or similar kind of tourism such as ecotourism or pro-poor tourism, which are supposed to redress the inequalities created by the neoliberal system. However, the empowerment of private corporations to respond the market failures they have created, embodied in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), can critically be seen as a way for capitalism to secure its socio-economic context and guarantee the creation of its own social regulation (Horowitz, 2015). Neoliberalism is said to be articulated around local contexts and thus will create uneven and incomplete results (Duffy, 2015). Bakker (2010) has accounted for the variegation of neoliberalism and underlines the importance of the findings of Harvey and Horowitz by describing neoliberalism also as a cultural formation. In addition, she refers to its dimensions as a political formation and governing practices, which has been emphasized by Rytteri & Puhakka (2012), and she supports Duffy's focus on neoliberalization of nature by describing neoliberalism as an ecological process. Obviously, neoliberalism is also comprised in the dimension of economic process[2].

Given the actual neoliberal context, the success of ecotourism as a worldwide promoted strategy by a range of very diverse actors all encompassed in the same market-driven logic does not come as a surprise. The expansion through ecotourism of the implicit (or explicit) endorsement of the objectives and means of neoliberalism, that Fletcher calls manifold capitalist fix (2016), makes the need for critical assessment even more crucial. Critical researchers have been able to identify several mechanisms by which ecotourism expand neoliberal logics, creating inequalities and uneven development. Such mechanisms can include neoliberalization of nature, accumulation by dispossession, environmentalism of the rich, and many others (Ávila-García et al., 2012), which are often the result of politicized human activities and by consequence, could require a political ecology approach to be analyzed (Maguigad et al., 2015;

1. For further discussion, see Fletcher and Neves, 2012.
2. For further discussion see Bakker, 2010.

Fletcher, 2016). Identification of patterns repeated through different geographical contexts and scales of ecotourism development, will contribute, in the continuity of the critical debate, to the unpacking of conceptual and factual blind spots about ecotourism and to a possible reduction of its negative effects.

III. METHODOLOGY

As the aim of the study is to discover which are the causes hindering the application of the marketed principles of ecotourism, qualitative research is recommended according to Bradshaw & Startford (in Hay, 2005). The use of analytic induction, as often conducted in human geography (Crang in Flowerdew & Martin, 1997), is particularly adapted and can be coupled with a practice which is extensive in the tourism field (Beeton, 2005): case studies. They are secondary data describing a wide scope of aspects (Flowerdew & Martin, 1997), which is convenient while describing processes inherent to a multidisciplinary topic such as ecotourism.

Beeton underlines the usefulness of case study research in tourism through the features that it "can illustrate the complexities of a situation by recognizing more that [sic] one contributing factor" (2005, p.38). More importantly, it allows for holistic inductive comprehension through an insider's perspective. This is especially relevant to the present study methodology, which is using the inductive function of case studies to determine the cause of the observed negative effects of ecotourism. However, case studies are context specific and the extraction of patterns requires identifying a tendency independent of a particular context, meaning a pattern repeated in several and different contexts. Cross-case study search for pattern helps alleviate the risk of reaching a premature conclusion by looking at data in divergent ways (Eisenhart, 1989), and answer Castree's critique (2008b) about the need for studies in ecotourism to go beyond the specific context. Bramwell (2011) puts forward the use of case studies as especially relevant concerning governance, sustainability, tourism and their particular interactions, which the present study is concerned with. He mentions how case studies can be used to compare the provisional theoretical explanation with specific cases, which is reflected in the methodology of the present study.

As the case studies used are secondary data, the elaboration of the literature review becomes an inherent part of the methodology. At first, it helps to gain insights on what issues have been made visible by the numerous researchers who describe implementation and outcomes of ecotourism both theoretically and empirically, which is described by Hay (2005) as essential to qualitative research. Then, a holistic understanding of up-to-date debate helps the selection of cases featuring the most discussed issues, from an informed perspective, which will, in turn, increase the chance for relevant patterns identification. A limit of the methodology lies in the fact that case studies are selected to be representative of the problems generated by ecotourism (as to understand their origin) and thus, do not offer a global perspective of both positive and negative outcomes.

With the aim of presenting diverse cases but maintaining the depth of analysis, a total of four cases of ecotourism implementation have been selected throughout the literature review. According to International Survival (in Mowforth and Munt, 2015) and repeated

throughout the literature review, local control over touristic development is the most important concept if people right's -and ecotourism principles- are to be respected. Thus, all the case studies selected are discussing and adding elements to this key notion. Moreover, the case studies should be articulated around different contexts to reach a mature conclusion, which can be ensured by following those criteria for case study selection: authors diversity, geographical diversity, scale diversity, and decision power diversity. Finally, social and environmental changes, as well as economic distribution arising from ecotourism introduction, should be presented in every case study.

Case studies are described in summary fact sheets in the next section. They have been analyzed and compared as to identify patterns hindering the fulfillment of ecotourism promises along the following method. First, four categories have been created, following the main objectives of ecotourism: "Environment" for environmental conservation, "Economy" for poverty alleviation, "Society" for population well-being and "Governance" for the empowerment of local population. Then, the impacts due to tourism introduction described in the four cases (for example: "rise in conflicts within the host population", "increase in littering", etc) are turned into codes and are classified by category. After that, repeated codes are analyzed, put in relation with the objectives and style of ecotourism development chosen, and compared as to understand their origin. In line with the qualitative methodology of analysis induction, the extraction of patterns is undertaken by going from materials to ideas and back, identifying codes, categories and their content (Crang in Hay, 2005). The three patterns extracted represent the missing link between the positive aims of ecotourism and its negative results - the three uncovered mechanisms hindering the fulfillment of ecotourism promises- and are discussed in the corresponding section as final results.

IV. ANALYSIS

4.1. Promotion sustainability through increased community involvement: the Shangri-La ecotourism demonstration project (Morais et al., 2006).

Scale: Municipality

Location: Xia-Gei village, Shangri-La County, Province of Yunnan, China.

Habitat description: Mountainous region

Climate features: 1750mm yearly average rainfall, 17° yearly average temperature

The area in which Xia-Gei is located is a remote natural area with high cultural diversity, where logging, one of its two traditional economic activities, was forbidden. Hence, as the province has a poor potential for extraction, it was oriented by the Chinese national government towards ecotourism. From 1995, the opening of the first tourism bureau in the Yunnan Province, tourism growth has been exponential to the point that in four years, tourist arrivals multiplied by 26.2, including 92.5% of domestic tourism. This is due to the heavy promotion by the government of Zhongidan County (which name was changed to Shangri-La County to make it more attractive) as a mountain paradise where enlightened residents leave in peace and harmony with nature and high spiritual life. However, the high increase in tourism over a short period of time led to degradation of culture and nature with limited economic rewards,

as well as other specific negative impacts in the destinations of the area such as: alienation of the ethnic minority from the tourism economy, defacement of Dai architecture, loss of less marketable traits of local culture, retain of profits and monopoly of retail industry by outside investors, control of culture display due to promotion by external agents, etc. Those negative impacts led the provincial government to sponsor the Shangri-La Ecotourism Demonstration Project (SLED) that was aimed at being a model for other nearby destinations. It supported the use of ecotourism as a tool for conservation of natural areas and cultural heritage as well as the creation of socio-economic benefits through high community control and involvement. It was based in the village of Xia-Gei, and included its neighboring attractions (Bita Lake, Gui-Hua Buddhist temple) and the main lodging centre in Shangri-La County. To monitor the project, in summer 1998, a study following Participatory Rural Apraisal method was initiated: local residents of Xia-Gei village and attractions were asked: 1) what objectives they would like to achieve through tourism development 2) what type of development they wished for that could preserve community's cultural and natural resources 3) what challenges they encountered in participating in the tourism industry. The study reveals that local residents felt that they needed assistance in the implementation of ideas they had to engage in tourism: rental of horses to visit the Bita Lake (help to solve conflicting use with hiking trail and respect holly character of lake), selling locally made craft (help to select which craft to sell), offering homestays (help in learning foreign language and hospitality skills) and sharing Tibetan Buddhist religion (help not to deface traditional architecture nor violate Buddhist doctrine). In 1999, a program was conducted by the local and provincial government to achieve the mentioned objectives. It helped residents with infrastructure development in many forms: building two access roads to Bita Lake (one for horse riders, one for hikers), placing signs in English and Mandarin within the temple perimeter to avoid misbehaviors of tourists and constructing a parking area, restroom and ticket office. Training of local villagers was also another kind of help provided through the program: three days hospitality training to familiarize hosts with their future guest's habits, pricing techniques and else, and workshop about price and kind of craft to produce. Finally, regulation was also introduced such as a control of the competition through equal opportunity represented by a rotation system in horse rental and equal contribution in horses by all families for the village-run stable. The fees to access the temple will be dedicated at 75% to the temple preservation project and 25% would be given to Shangri-La tourism board. In 2002, a second study was held in order to assess the results of the community-based driven policy, in which appeared that, through some objectives were achieved, deep negative cultural and ecological changes due to tourism were still going on in the area. Positive changes in awareness about trash disposal, the need for collaboration for long-term sustainability and women higher involvement in cultural dances and songs were noted. However, tourism was still dominated by package tour wholesalers who monopolized the market and created high leakage, as tourists mostly stayed in modern hotels, conducted tightly-scheduled visits by bus with tour guide lacking knowledge. As a result, attractions within the typical tour circuit show signs of overuse (horse trail to Bita Lake is eroding because most tourists don't have time to walk to the lake and prefer renting horses) or even pollution and degradation (trash, soil erosion, flora degradation around Bita Lake). The SLED project was also the initiator of tensions between local residents in general and monks in particular, as tourists passing quickly through Gui-Hua Buddhist temple only stopped (and donated) to the palaces closer the main circuit,

neglecting other monks who in turn became jealous and committed act of vandalism on the interpretation signs within the temple area. Government's focus on fast economic growth and market-driven strategy contrasted with SLED project, beneficiating national tourism groups which concentrated on large tour groups (the majority of the demand) when local would like to dedicate themselves about rural tourism on a smaller scale.

4.2. The limitation of community-based tourism as an instrument of development cooperation: the value of the Social Vocation of the Territory concept (Gascón, 2013).

Scale: District

Location: Amantani and Taquile islands, district of Amantani, Province of Puno, Peru.

Habitat: Mountainous lake island

Climate: 689mm yearly average rainfall, 7° yearly average temperature

In 1970, a governmental body suggested to the people of Amantaní to take advantage of the natural must-see attraction that is their lake to diversify their source of income. After being talked to by the government and NGO experts, the people of Amantani believed ecotourism would beneficiate everybody economically within their closely-bonded community and started preparing to initiate it. A rotation system within families was introduced to host guests while to offer a fair distribution of demand. To become a host and enter the rotation system, the local population had to refurbish a room in accordance with governmental regulation and pay a tax. Those who couldn't bear those costs (room preparation) were thought to beneficiate from tourism under the communal form of selling handicrafts. However insufficient promotion and successful competition from the neighbor island (Taquile) hindered the benefits perceived by the population as only a few guests arrived at the island, to what 15 years of armed conflict in the area starting in 1980 brought even fewer visitors. The rotation system failed. The few guests who visited the area arrived on the island on boats driven by Amantaní boatmen. The boatmen, in addition of collecting the transport fare, channelled all guest towards their own guesthouse, or one of their friends and family, thus excluding the rest of the host families of the island from a potential benefit. The monopolization of the new source of revenue as well as the unequal distribution of benefits brought not only community conflicts, frustration and financial loss but also increased the socio-economic differences between inhabitants. Indeed, the extra income earned by boat people made them the most economically well placed social group, allowing them to take over the political institutions as they required financial investment from those in charge. Thus, the political decisions taken by the boat people were done in regard of their own interests in tourism and they invested allocated resources in activities directed at improving their own conditions, to the detriment of the rest of the population. The loss of decision making power for the non-beneficiating part of the population decreased their standards of living, which brought increasing unrest within the community as they resisted this growing inequality. The political landscape became unstructured, with mayors elected with a very low percentage and often voted out.

In Taquile, the neighbor island, ecotourism was going so well that during the 80's and 90's there were cited as an example of good practice. However, as the tourism business

was successful, external travel agencies showed interest and tried to get control over the tourism flow and profits. Hence, starting in 1990, conflict for profits and control of tourism arise between people of Taquile and external travel agencies. Luckily external agents such as priests, researchers and NGO members managed to leave control to Taquile inhabitants, who were distributing the profits quite equally between them. But as the external agents departed and the government put forward neoliberal policies defending corporate right over community right, the delicate balance collapsed, external travel agencies gained control over tourism, and income on the island became very concentrated among few islanders.

4.3. The art of neoliberalizing park management: commodification, politics and hotel construction in Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park, Finland (Rytteri & Puhakka, 2012).

Scale: National Park (Regional)

Location: Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (PYNP), Lapland Province, Finland

Habitat: forested fells

Climate: 475mm yearly average rainfall, -1.7° yearly average temperature

In 1922 in Finland, the first ideas about the establishment of protected natural areas emerged as a solution to the observed damages of economic expansion under the form of extraction in pristine areas. The first Conservation Act aimed at creating protected natural areas, published by Finnish government, was passed in 1923. If elite and scientists showed enthusiasm about it, local residents of the future protected area, were more doubtful as they feared the access to traditional livelihood (hunting, fishing, pastures for reindeers) would be endangered. The process took until 1938 for four national parks, including Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (PYNP), to be introduced in scenic areas already including tourism infrastructures. With a loan of the Finnish government, The Finish Tourist Association had built in 1936 a hotel that was within the border of the park. Many touristic and recreational infrastructures were added to PYNP, including ski lifts, a visitor centre with caravan campground and wilderness huts. In 2002, management of the park went from Forest Research Institute to a state-owned enterprise in charge of managing national parks. In 2005, the decision was taken double the area of the park.

Before that, in 1997, the hotel within the park was sold, going from public ownership to the private company Ebur Oy (owner: Pertti Yliniemi), which wanted to turn this "sleeping" potential capital into a flowing venture. Ylinemi sent in 2001 a request to the municipality of Munio asking to move its border so they would include the hotel, thus leaving Kittilä municipality. Muonio accepted and brought the proposal in front of the government, although Kittilä municipality did not agree. The Kittilä commune was indeed interested in a harmonious hotel development taking into account the needs of the local population for livelihood and conservation of nature and saw the removal of borders as a treat to reindeer herders and small-scale tourism enterprises. At the time, the Interior Minister passively supported Kittilä municipality, but after a new Government was elected, it was suddenly eager to support Muonio municipality as the proposal was said likely to improve possibilities of operation of the entrepreneur. In 2003, Interior Minister acceded to the request of borders displacement. Yliniemi didn't

conduct any work on the hotel in order to maintain its good state nor renovated it, he just let it degrade. Even though the law -Conservation Act (1096/1996)- does not allow fix constructions within national parks, in 2004 Yliniemi presented a plan to build a new hotel to the Environment committee of the Parliament, which was declined. Despite this, Muonio municipality and the entrepreneur started drafting a plan about a tourism development project within the national park, including the new hotel. The plan was examined by various consulting firms, which didn't judge it excessive in terms of environmental impacts. Even if its inhabitants were considering the project as a damaging one, Muonio municipality supported it as it would bring growth in tourism volume and further investments. In 2007, a new Government was elected again and immediately started the first draft of a governmental bill allowing the enlargement of the hotel to up to 8 times it original size, with a total of 500 beds. It was argued that a lesser increase would reduce the profitability of the project. A multitude of stakeholders began protesting about the development plan and created the association "save Pallas", claiming the project would both damage environment and change the small-scale traditional character of the park. It would also be the first time the economic motives of a private company would be allowed to develop over the willingness of the local inhabitants and the national law, making this scheme easier to be repeated later and thus more important to fight now. Following the public discussion, the government agreed to revise its bill and decided in favor of a fewer alternative: 250 beds, 10 000 square meters of above-ground construction and the dismantlement of the camping area to reduce total capacity. The opponents were not satisfied with the new permissive draft, neither were the entrepreneur nor the municipality who argued the government should go back to the previous allowance. Minister of Foreign Trade and Development agreed that the scenario would be unprofitable for the entrepreneur and convinced the government to extend the allowance to 320 beds. The environmental committee to which the bill was presented wrote a report including two objections to the project (reject or reduction) but did not consider the project would impact the traditional character of the station neither have worse environmental damages. In July 2010, the bill was voted by the Finnish government in favor of, at 90 voices against 55, allowing the construction of a private hotel within a restricted natural area.

4.4. Neoliberalising nature: global networks and ecotourism development in Madagascar (Duffy, 2008).

Scale: National

Location: Madagascar, Indian Ocean.

Habitats: Rain forest, dry forest, plateaus, deserts, mangroves, marshes, coral reefs.

Climate: 1250mm yearly average rainfall, 21.8° yearly average temperature

In 2002, President Ravalomanana was elected and, contrarily to its predecessors, he decided to push his country towards liberalization and diversification. He turned towards English speaking countries such as US and UK to be provided with greater economic and political support than its historic partner, the Frenches.

Conservation had been identified by donors, NGOs and IFIs as a critical sector for Madagascar, as the island is home to highly biodiverse and endemic wildlife within an extremely poor context. Thus, ecotourism has been designed as the fitting strategy to achieve environmental conservation while enhancing economic development and had been promoted as such by a wide range of organization such as: IFIs, government, private sector and global NGOs. Wildlife-based ecotourism was developed under the form of national parks, reserves, beaches and marine-based attractions to be encountered on the island of Nosy Be, where most attractions are concentrated. Some of them are located alongside the route through south-central Madagascar. The Professional Association of Tour Operators managed to increase thrust and contracts with northern operators while the Ministry of tourism made joint marketing with Mauritius Island to be cost-effective, and decided to add cultural components to its existing ecotourism offer, leading Madagascar to be identified by the UNWTO as one of the top emerging destination in term of arrivals.

The creation of ecotourism policy for the country on a 15 years basis (until 2009) that had been designed by the World Bank to fit the needs of the global market and be consistent with a market-oriented economic liberalization, gained the immediate support of the President once elected. The Donor Consortium, a national mechanism compounded of foreign governments as donors, IFIs (the most influential one being the World Bank) and NGOs, is in charge of developing and implementing policies for ecotourism in Madagascar. This complex array of transnational network allowed in 2003 for the Wildlife Conservation Society and other NGOs to lobby the government into tripling (from 3 to 10% of the territory) the natural area under protection. It was said to be economically self-sustaining because it would show the world the efforts put into becoming ecotourism leader by Madagascar. A highly complex range of actors made up the Durban Vision Group in charge of this project and if a lot of funding were invested, it is difficult to know who invested and who received them. In any case, the initial project was quickly abandoned and redefined in a more implementable and socially respectable way, with the introduction of zoning for different uses within the protected area. However, the local population and communities scarcely have been given a chance to voice their concerns and took part neither in the planning nor in the implementation of the ecotourism schemes, although it will have a direct impact on their lifestyle. The participation of local in decision making is tokenistic, just sufficient to allow tour operators to claim they are respecting the aims of ecotourism, while in reality, communities suffer from associated costs of conservation such as ban on hunting, population displacement or crop damage caused by wildlife, without having an opportunity to voice their concern and design solutions. With very little enthusiasm, local populations are pushed towards neoliberal logics such as the harvesting of the forest in order to turn it into a source of economic value, making them participate to the national economy and installing market-based mechanisms to control resources, away from state welfare.

As a source of high biodiversity, Madagascar is targeted by many zoos as the collecting point for their animal collection and offer to compensate by some fundings in local projects, wells, education, etc. However, many of the wells constructed by the Zürich Zoo to compensate for their wildlife capture stopped to function shortly after their digging. As local population lacked the funds to invest, a lot of private actors have emerged in Madagascar as providers

of high-end luxury ecotourism accommodation, increasing leakage. Some of those high-end luxury tourism firms are trying to have social positive impacts beyond the employment of locals, by investing in local infrastructure for example. However, this doesn't allow for locals to conduct tourism on their own terms. Local residents have expressed their concerns over the existence of protected areas that have excluded them from their ancestral land use without providing them with another economic opportunity, as most tourists visiting protected parks are day-tripping and sleeping far from the park, without interacting or doing any transactions with locals.

V. RESULTS

5.1. Neoliberal governance – whose interests are served?

According to the results, patterns of ecotourism implementation are intertwined with neoliberal policies and practices and follow three main mechanisms: 1) extension of neoliberal governance to the detriment of local population self-determination, 2) modification of local culture towards market-driven logics and 3) increased neoliberalization of nature under the form of commodification.

It is important to note that, according to Bramwell and Lane (2011), the concept of governance can and should help to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism, enhancing the democratic process and the achievement of social, environmental and economic objectives within the destination. However, this has not been the fact for the different ecotourism developments evaluated. Indeed, the results encountered are closer to those of Moscardo (in Bramwell and Lane 2011), who describes residents to have the most limited role in destination governance.

Within all case studies evaluated and despite the different scales represented, the impulse to enter ecotourism has never been one of the populations of the future destinations. Once introduced and promoted by external agents, ecotourism through its multiple promises may create some enthusiasm within the local population, but do not emerge as a response to its expressed desires. Looking at all cases, it appears that suggestions or decisions to enter ecotourism for an area or a country came from government (regionally or nationally) and are linked to an alignment with the capitalist ideology of economic growth, as all projects are presented as economic strategies to attract capital. Moreover, a growing compliance to market-driven strategies and policies associated to neoliberal expansion was also identified in all contexts (but differently articulated of course) and supported by different transitional actors such as IFIs, NGOs, the private sector, etc. This is consistent with the findings of Braudel, according to whom transitions to capitalist development are due to the state stance (in Harvey, 2003, p.74). Some of the mechanisms used in the different contexts to extend the power of the markets can be put in relation with those identified by Castree's (2008a). Examples of *reregulation* have been encountered within all cases as well as those of *marketization* and *flanking mechanisms*. Those mechanisms are used to ascertain, socially, the "(re)negotiation of the boundaries between the market, the state and the civil society" (p.143), confirming neoliberalism as a social project to be expanded to all part of the society.

If the first reason to implement a project is economic, advocates of ecotourism do not forget to put forward the other effects it should bring: a mean to provide income for inhabitants or nature conservation, in line with the "win-win" ecotourism script. This is consistent with the description of ecotourism as preferred strategy of development (Gascón, 2013), as it helps leverage more than one economic sector of the society (and thus increases return on investment) while securing its position as a flanking mechanism aimed at redressing externalities (social inequalities and environmental depletion) of the capitalist system. Hence, ecotourism strengthens the role of firms (via corporate social responsibility, between others) and the private sectors in general to manage their own externalities. Those results seem to be in line with those of Horowitz (2015) who presents flanking mechanisms (CSR especially) as means to ensure a socio-politic context favorable to capitalist development, empowering firm overstate as a key agent of social welfare. Ecotourism is popular within the demand and the supply side and is heavily promoted by international development planners, which has led it to become an overall increasingly chosen strategy (Fletcher, 2011), even if it does not fit local context. As it is a non-traditional activity in most destinations, ecotourism introduction will increase the role played by external agents, accentuating the loss of control from the locals. Local control is, however, the most crucial concept in relation to tourism development if people's rights are to be respected (International Survival, in Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

Ecotourism is often introduced in pristine or remote places (Honey, 2008), which had until now just a few contacts with the tourism industry before and relied on other types of subsistence (Gascón, 2013). For locals, tourism is not a traditional activity, thus they don't have any mechanisms in place to manage it nor the unrest it can provoke (Morais et al., 2006). It lacks pertinence to create community empowerment through an activity that is sometimes not even known by the population when often ecotourism replaces activities locals were skilled about and that could have beneficiated from more support. The introduction of ecotourism is often subsequent to the cessation of a traditional activity and serving the interests of locals, more attention should be brought to their skills and wishes than to what could potentially deliver greater forms of capital accumulation. The problem lies in the fact that, often locals are ignorant and inexperienced about the operations of tourism (Gascón 2013), leading them to be dependent on external agents from the very start of the project, which is exemplified through the cases. Locals clearly express their fear and reluctance to engage with tourists, underlining their lack of language knowledge and skills to provide tourism services. The lack of knowledge/training/self-confidence/motivation to introduce ecotourism on their own term is clearly a crucial draw-back on the introduction of ecotourism as a mean for social justice, as it hinders the possibility of self-management of the activity and creates a relation of dependency with external agents. This dependency relation is very problematic in the respect of the principles of ecotourism, such as self-governance, community involvement, empowerment and control, etc. and might explain why ecotourism is so often the chosen strategy: it helps others people than the locals to achieve their own agenda (Fletcher, 2016). Despite the various degrees of community participation explored, none of the results provided a solution where the locals were truly in charge of the design of the new economic activity. It is, in the end, the external agents (belonging to NGOs, private companies, governmental support, etc.) who carried the implementation and designed the ecotourism project. Hence, it was identified that form of community participation in ecotourism planning and management was often a tokenistic,

flawed process and the participation model recognized as ethnocentric when dealing with developing economies. This is contradictory with the marketed goals of ecotourism as a community empowerment and driver of local governance. Unfortunately, those results resemble political signs of disempowerment identified by Scheyvens (1999).

In addition of resulting in a loss of control from the local population over the activities held on their territory, the introduction of ecotourism also results in a socio-economic differentiation within the local population that can be a source of conflict. As seen, ecotourism projects introduce a dependency on external help and investment. The ecotourism model will thus be implemented according to the norms of those external agents, which will not fail to serve their own interests in the process. As the community often does not possess enough capital to invest in ecotourism, it is dependent on external investments to introduce tourism infrastructure. However, those who will choose to invest instead of the locals will not do so without benefits at stake. So, it is quite natural that all cases reported high leakage of the tourism industry, allowing locals to collect but very few if not none of the economic benefits leveraged in the area. Those who implemented it (external agents) captured most of the incomes created. Monopolies from the tourism industry (such as national or international tour operators) are reported by the population as well as their own exclusion from the economic activity. Locals also complained about the repartition of the profits made from the tourism within the population, which benefit those who already possessed socio-economic advantages, and thus were able to take part in the tourism industry from the start to the detriment of the poorer or more discriminated part of the population. Indeed, those within the population who adapted quickly (or had enough money to invest) to the new market-driven model received more benefits of the ecotourism activity. The disadvantaged claim the competition is unfair, as they have only a few or no investments to bring into ecotourism and do not know how to handle it, leading any tourism initiative coming from a community to have less chance of being successful compared to external initiatives based on experience and knowledge of the external market. Income opportunities are few and unfair, so they create tensions and disillusion within society. This is in accordance with the economic and psychological signs of disempowerment identified by Scheyvens (1999)

Surprisingly, if generally put forward and used as an argument when discussing the implementation of ecotourism project, the employment generated by the different projects is barely described in the different cases. Is it because only a few jobs were created, or because their nature cannot be claimed as a positive impact? This second proposition relates to the findings of Cañada (2010), whose work describes the loss of employment within traditional sectors, replaced with low pay, low skills jobs from the tourism industry that include seasonality, insecurity, low incomes and gender discrimination towards women who are being employed for their same tasks they operate at home. León (2007) describes in her work the segregation done in the Dominican Republic's tourism industry in employing younger people who talk more than one language, which can be relayed in the cases to the fact that people with a higher socio-economic position were beneficiating more from tourism.

Considering the non-interest in ecotourism, the flawed tourism participation process, the loss of governance and negative outcomes, why is there no resistance from the locals in entering ecotourism? The answer is, when there is resistance, it is unsuccessful to face the

power held by advocates of ecotourism. As described in Polany's argument (in Castree, 2008a), the introduction of market-based mechanisms creates resistance. The resistance might not appear at once, because the extent of the changes that neoliberalization through ecotourism will induce is not fully internalized yet by the populations. Nonetheless, once projects are implemented, different phenomena of shift of power, re-shaping social relations and uneven benefits distribution achieve to provoke unrest and frustration within the society, leading part of it to resist.

In a context of neoliberal extension, market-driven strategies are preferred as they can leverage profits much faster and on a bigger scale than locally-developed and promoted ecotourism. Connecting with transnational networks, external agents are faster in designing a viable product adapted to wealthy customers that will provide incomes in the short term. External agents are thus encouraged by government to take part in ecotourism and are rising in importance quickly, channelling to them authority support, gaining power and influence. Local population does not receive the necessary support (or lesser pressure) to conduct ecotourism in a difficult neoliberal context focused on short-term profits, as it would require a lot of time to allow for a strong sustainability project to be set up. The best practices require community total involvement and participation using cohesion and cooperation to aim at slow growth, small-scale projects that would help preserve unique characteristics of culture and environment (Morais et al., 2006). Successful ecotourism projects should achieve the maximum level of community control and benefits (Nault & Stapleton, 2011), which is not represented throughout the case studies. Still, local destinations are pushed towards ecotourism anyway, leading them to be dependent on external agents that will design policies and participation models beneficiating their own economic interests to the disadvantage of the local population. Indeed, social and environmental benefits are far from being the first or only concern in the implementation of ecotourism projects, and the evaluation of the outcomes seems to take more into account the general level of economic transaction generated than what part of it has been beneficial to the local population.

5.2. Cultural neoliberalization - the neoliberal hegemony

As a new activity is introduced, new dynamics are created within the host community as to whom will tend to it and who might receive its benefits, leading to unavoidable changes in the social and cultural background. In most cases, community organization was closely linked to traditional activities, in majority agricultural, and demonstrated a high level of solidarity. The introduction of tourism generated in all case studies conflicts and unrest within the local population, often regarding the increase in socio-economic differentiation and shifts in power induced by the new activity. This is consistent with Bakker (2010), findings of the necessarily uneven results of neoliberalization. In the case studies, those who beneficiated most from the income generated by tourism within the host community were those with enough resources to invest in tourism and flexible enough to adapt to the market-driven scheme. Those findings are in line with those of Li (2010), who notes that part of the population will comply with the new market-driven scheme as they are attracted by economic advantages, generating conflict with those who do not accept it and would like to preserve their traditional mechanisms. The case studies also show that when neoliberal logic is introduced within

a non-market place (under the form of marketization of the environment or the culture for example), it provokes resistance, in line with Polany's arguments (in Castree, 2008). According to Horowitz results, when neoliberal hegemony, grounded in capitalist culture, intersects with counter-hegemonic forces, the latters are overcome through the development of strategies articulated around local contexts (2015, p.98). The case study written by Rittery and Puhakka (2012) is a good example of how a handful of investors, advocating fewer regulations and free markets, manage to re-regulate the laws in accordance to their monetary interests and reshape the politic context to their economic vision against protesting groups defending the interests of society and environment. As it reshapes the community organization and power structure, neoliberalism logic extension can be related to neo-colonialism (Mowforth and Munt, 2015): it also modifies people tastes, thoughts and acts, governing more areas of their life from an economic logic. The case study written by Gascón (2013) exemplifies how a community once based on solidarity and cohesion has come to tear each other apart because the new economic activity (ecotourism) had reshaped the way people share and define property rights, making them individual profits oriented instead of community welfare oriented. More and more, community-based lifestyle is being replaced with market-driven strategies. Going back to the relation of dependency on external agents, it can thus be said that it creates neo-liberal hegemony, extending and deepening neoliberal governance as a necessary social and cultural project.

Indeed, in order to be hosts of ecotourists, locals are supposed to learn and adapt to the tastes of "the demand", their future customers. Instead of opening their culture as it is to curious visitors, economically successful projects of ecotourism seem to require a lot of investment and structural changes as to provide high-end accommodation, cooking adapted to tastes of visitors, expected level of service, etc. External agents assist in adapting typical and culturally rich experiences into marketable products fitting the tastes of another culture, often western, or simply representing those of the biggest market share of the destination. It is a form of cultural hegemony, the appliance of the western constructs as the undisputed normative basis to build upon, which has been suggested by Cater (2006). It forces destinations entering tourism to reshape their territory, their economy, their cultural production to match the expectations of external actors in hope of getting some financial return, rather than to fit their own direct interests. In some cases, locals are passively been looked upon as they can not interact with tourists because they speak only their native language, creating an increased dependency on external agents to act as facilitators of cultural exchange. In other cases, locals need to actively demonstrate certain aspects of their culture (dances, songs, customs, etc.) to satisfy their visitors, modifying the rhythm they would traditionally perform those. The need for locals to change their customs and rise their hosting standards, stressed out by the tourism industry, can be understood as a form of gentrification, changing a traditional use of territory serving the benefits of its population to a use based on the compliance with external agents' culture and richer tourists' desires. Considering Bakker's typology of socio-nature neoliberalization, the previously described effect (the introduction of market-driven logics into traditional society resulting in negative social outcomes but positive monetary income) can be established as a "social fix", in the way that is produces "a social degradation as a source of profit" (2010, p.724).

Most of the time, the culture of locals is presented by outside agents (often from outgoing foreign travel agencies) who select the most marketable traits, reshaping the understanding of visitors about the local culture, leading to misinterpretation. In the facts, the very culture of residents is being marketed and sold as an experience. This might be put in relation with the results of Hale (2002), who explained that only a minimal part of the local culture is recognized (as here only some marketable traits) and the rest rejected: what can be used as a source of income is taken into consideration, and what might not produce benefits is neglected.

As explained, spreading ecotourism allow neoliberalism to extend its reach into pristine areas and non-capitalist societies. Neoliberalism is necessarily a social project, as to survive it has to convert individuals and societies to its logic until it becomes embodied in the way people think and act (Harvey, 2007). If Mowforth and Munt (2015) describe it as neo-colonialism, Higham (2007) prefers to call it imperialism. In both cases, the objectives are profits and power, the methods vary depending on the context and the impacts, in reality, reflect uneven distribution of wealth and increased global governance including neoliberal hegemony.

5.3. Neoliberalization of nature – a necessarily environmental project

Neoliberalism can also be considered as a necessarily environmental project. Indeed, all case studies confirm environmental changes following the introduction of ecotourism and the expansion of market-driven logics. Nature is managed as a business, a potential source of income that should be turned into an effective one, being from a governmental or external agents perspective. Even locals have modified the way they interact with nature. Ecotourism is depicted as the mean to turn "sleeping" assets into effective prosperity. This has been achieved either by selling the destination as a remote natural area where to witness the peace and beauty of the surroundings, selling excursions to the nature or by introducing a protected area that should be paid for to enter. In order to achieve all those, tourism organizations had first to guarantee their access and rights to nature over other conflicting uses, such as agricultural ones, residential ones, etc. The phenomenon is known from the social debate under the term "neoliberalization of nature", which tends to commodify it under different forms, and works along the four logics identified by Castree (2008) that extend free market-driven logics into the non-human world. Indeed, in the cases, an illustration of some of the environmental fixes depicted by Castree can be encountered. The first fix, for instance, allowing the resorption of economy-environment contradictions by bringing non-human world more fully into capital accumulation, is present in all case studies, even if the fix is clearer when protected areas are designated. In smaller scale ecotourism, natural areas were also presented as a source of potential benefit through non-consumption use if only it could be sold together with an experience to those who possess financial power. The marketization of non-human nature with a disguise of environmental conservation is also named free-market environmentalism and contributes to render invisible the negative effects of neoliberalization of nature through ecotourism (Duffy, 2015). The fourth environmental fix is very clear in the case written by Duffy (2008) as it is non-state agents that wrote the new national environmental policies. Across cases studies, the observed abusive use of previously non-visited part of the natural areas including soil erosion, littering or degradation of flora is in relation to the fact that ecotourism

means the introduction of people within a pristine area, which relates to the second environmental fix: nature is a mean for capital accumulation, period. This underlines perfectly the intrinsic contradictions of the ecotourism script, which pretends to safeguard nature but at the same time introduce and heavily market its use, might it be in a non-extracting way, leading to some environmental depletion.

In the same vein of contradiction, ecotourism proposes to realize social advantages and protect nature at the same time. However, some of the cases studied describe clearly that the introduction of natural protected area aimed at tourism use results in many social disadvantages. The conservation and introduction of the tourism activities are thought along profits-driven guidelines and take few insights into the reality of communities having a use of the previously stately-owned or non-owned area. The introduction of protected areas means for some locals the exclusion of their ancestral territory, where were conducted the activities of subsistence and does not, in many cases, provide them with a compensatory activity or income. "Accumulation by dispossession" is the name that Harvey (2003) has given to the way of creating capital accumulation outside of the system of economic production mainly by dispossessing public assets and rights to the advantage of capitalists

VI. CONCLUSION

The literature review has covered a scholar debate, which indicates that the uneven results of tourism development, including negative social and environmental impacts, could be linked to the neoliberal nature of tourism management and context. Going through four case studies from different world regions, this research has confirmed those findings and associated mechanisms have been discussed.

One important aspect of ecotourism principle is its role to sustain population empowerment and self-determination (Higham, 2007). However, it was noted that in the cases, a shift of power occurred within the local population in favor of its wealthier members or external agents, who appeared to receive most of the ecotourism economic benefits and who gained in influence over policy design and control of the activity. The market-based mechanisms embodied in ecotourism implementation make it an activity that cannot be implemented on the own terms of the local population by lack of knowledge and thus, results in a dependency on external actors, which increases local and global neoliberal governance. Moreover, it was exemplified in the case studies that the negative social aspects reported, such as loss of social cohesion and traits of culture, growing unrest, tensions, and socio-economic differentiation as well as population displacement, can be put in relation with the introduction of ecotourism and the associated neoliberal hegemony mechanism. Environmental impacts can also be linked to the introduction of market-driven processes through ecotourism, leading nature to be increasingly managed as a business, as a source of income rather than as a co-constitution of humanity that needs a non-anthropocentric agency for effective ecological preservation (Bakker, 2010).

Managerial implications of the findings include different aspects. Firstly, ecotourism implementation should only be considered on the expressed wishes of the population, and more information should be provided on its potential negative effects to balance the

overwhelming advocacy it benefits from. If the locals choose to implement ecotourism, as few as possible indications should be given on the design of the ecotourism implementation and management program, as it should be undertaken on their own term, in a democratic and cohesive way that corresponds to their perception of hospitality. If external investments are needed for the project, they should come from institutions that will not expect or put pressure regarding volume and timing of return on investment, as ecotourism should be a slow growth, small-scale project (Morais et al., 2006), aimed at social and environmental benefits in priority. Large-scale promotion of the new destination should not be conducted, as to allow an organic, sustainable growth of the project and avoid reliance on external actors. In addition, the tourists taking part in ecotourism should be ready to experiment lifestyle the same way locals do, without expecting better accommodations than those of the villagers nor food from their origin country, thus allowing empowerment of the locals and improving cultural immersion. Travelling without booking excursions nor accommodation in advance through international tourism companies allow tourists to better spread their money once in the destination and beneficiate directly the local population. In order to reduce general environmental impacts, short and long-distance travels should be conducted without air transport, preferably using public transports. If natural protected areas must be designed, it should be through active collaboration with locals, encompassing different land use, as to safeguard their livelihood.

As exemplified, ecotourism still poses threats to natural areas and community welfare, which is contradictory with its very definition. Those findings, which are in line with those of similar studies, highlight the importance of rethinking the ecotourism scheme, and tourism in general, as ecotourism theoretically bears fewer impacts than tourism. Ecotourism as a neo-colonialism should not be sustained and transition towards more respectful and strongly sustainable forms of tourism should be initiated. There is room for improvement and it comprises understanding well where the problems come from, which was the aim of this study, and how to solve it, which future studies can help achieve. Hence, from the academic perspective, further research should be conducted on how to mitigate the negative effects of ecotourism despite its neoliberal context and make it an effective tool for social and environmental justice.

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