



SYNTHESIS ARTICLE

Maripres U. Sarinas,^{1*} and Daryono²

¹University of the Philippines Open University, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines

² School of Law, Indonesia Open University, Jalan Cabe Raya, Pondok Cabe, Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: maripres.sarinas@upou.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT – Community participation is crucial to sustainable development. This Special Issue consists of six articles focused on the various approaches involving the local community in sustainable heritage tourism. In the first article, a conceptual model of community participation influencing sustainable development was provided in the context of Asian heritage tourism.

Most studies on local community participation in sustainable development were conducted in Western countries and may not reflect the practice in Asia where the government has a primary role. Nguyen, et al. synthesized various findings on local community participation and proposed an overarching research framework that reflects the contextual characteristics of Asian sustainable development. With a strong governmental intervention, the study focused on the level and characteristics of community participation as a direct consequence of such intervention.

The articles that followed illustrate the role of the government and community participation in sustainable development, particularly in heritage tourism in the ASEAN countries, specifically Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Indonesian Coastal Batik Heritage

Husni Arifin, et al. reported that in managing Indonesia's cultural heritage, the semi-government initiatives are unsustainable because of lack of community participation. It is strongly believed that local communities are more committed and are more likely to take responsible actions for the tourism management and safeguarding of cultural heritage if they benefit from it socially, culturally, or economically. The Ladder of Participation by Arnstein (1969) and Chan (2016) provides a framework for understanding the meaning of participation but not on the quality of participation at each level. In their case study on tourism management of batik heritage, Husni, et al. examined the nature and level of community involvement. The study site is in a coastal batik at Pekalongan City, Central Java that has a long history in batik development. The authors discussed the role of the local government and the community in enhancing the creative tourism-based batik industry particularly in the

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village tourism *environmental management, capacity building, promotion, Integration of creative tourism with cultural tourism and shopping, and the development of Batik Supporting Industries.*

By organizing the village environment that is conducive to attract visitors, the batik tourism has contributed to an increase in the local income of informal sectors such as the pedicab drivers and those providing homestays for the tourists. In terms of capacity building, the local residents were also provided with various trainings such as tour guiding, entrepreneurship, mastery of batik designs and motifs, and local tourism services. Further, a formal education is also offered especially for the younger generation in the development of innovative batik products that can penetrate the wider market. While promotion strategies involve the batik industry actors. Through the museum-goes-to school activities, the Batik Museum staff serve as tutors to assist the students in learning batik and to increase the appreciation of the younger generation of batik as a wealth of Indonesian culture. Some entrepreneurs have also established cooperation with hotel operators to encourage guests to visit the batik villages.

Another strategy of the local government is connecting cultural tourism with creative tourism and shopping. The plan to open a river path would connect the Batik Museum with Batik Villages that could provide opportunities for the development of the Jatayu Region which has a wealth of ancient buildings as a cultural tourism area, thereby providing tourists with various tourism products in the city of Pekalongan. The local government was also encouraged to develop businesses related to the batik product supply chain such as canting, stamp, and natural dyes to ensure supplies for production and smooth operation of batik-based creative tourism in Pekalongan. The study concluded that the participation of the local government, batik industry and the creative tourism actors as an Integration of Community Involvement Program (ICIP) has multiple benefits on the economy and the tourism stakeholders in Pekalongan.

Practices at an ASEAN Heritage Park in the Philippines

Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve (MMFR) is a state-owned forest reserve managed by the University of the Philippines Los Baños by virtue of Republic Acts and Executive Orders. Through narrative research, Saludadez *et al.* discussed sustainable management practices promoting community participation in MMFR as an ASEAN Heritage Park. In the study, there are two categories of community that emerged: academic and non-academic communities. The academic community is composed of the university professors and students and the research institutions hosted by the university. The MMFR was originally intended for use by the university as a living laboratory for professors, students, and researchers, thus, it is considered a learning community. According to one research participant, the alumni are also considered as part of the community because after graduating from the university, most students have a sense of attachment to Mt. Makiling. On the other hand, the non-academic community refers to the barangays composed of families living in the forest, the municipalities in the peripheries of the mountain, the business establishments in the vicinity of the mountain, and the regulatory bodies of the national government.

The analysis also revealed three areas where community participation is promoted: protecting the MMFR; preserving the MMFR and promoting the MMFR for ecotourism. Both the academic and the non-academic community participate in protecting the MMFR. The university is responsible for maintaining the MMFR as a heritage park through monitoring by the forest guards and through efforts to modernize its protection. On the other hand, the non-academic community, particularly the barangay, participates as a security intelligence. The government also participates in the protection of the forest by providing funds support for road construction which makes trekking to the summit easier to increase protection at MMFR. On preserving the MMFR AHP, it is the academic community, mainly the University

has the authority to preserve the MMFR but the non-academic communities are also given the opportunities to participate in preserving the forest. The local community living within the forest participate through a social forestry program that is compatible with forest conservation. They also get involved in researches conducted by the university. The municipalities/ barangays are also supportive of certain projects in the MMFR because of the benefits that they also get from them. On their part, the government and private companies also have a share in educating the visitors/ tourists on how the MMFR can be preserved. While an approach in conserving the MMFR AHP is through its ecotourism program that is not purely recreation but focused on nature-based tourism where tourists can acquire knowledge and increase their understanding, appreciation and awareness of forest and natural resources conservation. Both the academic and the non-academic communities participate in the various programs in promoting the MMR AHP for ecotourism. Such programs include the "Educators for Nature Tourism" involving the students to serve as nature guides for the visitors; "Make it Makiling", an adventure activity where participants can enjoy the forest and its biodiversity through competition e.g. fun walk/run. The ecotourism program in MMFR HAP is focused on good quality visits and highly educated visitors rather than the numbers of visitors.

Given the nature of Mt. Makiling as a forest reserve mainly for educational purposes, the greatest portion of the community is the academic community. Although there are instances of conflict with the non-academic community as revealed in the narrative inquiry, the academic community is open to partnering with them. The authors concluded that sustainable heritage management has to live with such reality.

Cultural Heritage and Tourism Management at World Heritage Sites in Sukhothai Province, Thailand

Esichaikul and Chansawang examined the sustainable management practices at world heritage sites in Sukhothai Province. Based on several sources on cultural heritage and sustainable tourism management concepts, the authors established seven dimensions for investigating cultural heritage and sustainable tourism management practices that include conservation and preservation of heritage, planning and management of heritage, economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability, ecological sustainability, collaboration network of stakeholders, and community participation.

The results of their study showed that sustainable heritage tourism has greatly contributed to the local economy as well as to social and cultural conservation. The management of the Sukhothai Historical Park (SHP) is government-led under the jurisdiction of the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture of Thailand. Community participation is also essential in sustainable heritage management. While the park authority is responsible for conservation and management of the world heritage, the local community provides assistance, specifically for physical management, orderliness and safety of the park surroundings. However, after receiving UNESCO World Heritage status for the SHP, more rules and regulations were established in accordance with UNESCO requirements that have affected the ways of life of the local people.

Although the park authority had informed the local communities about the importance of the heritage and had given them opportunities to participate in major cultural events, they were not consulted on park development and management. The study also revealed that the local communities have limited participation in the SHP tourism planning and management due to lack of knowledge and tourism management skills. Further, they are also not aware that their participation in decision-making processes is crucial for sustainable tourism development. The authors recommended a bottom-up approach for heritage tourism management with better coordination among relevant stakeholders and regular monitoring of tourism impacts to achieve sustainability.

A Government-Guided Participation to Heritage Tourism in Trang An-Vietnam

Nguyen, et al. examined the impact of community participation to sustainable tourism development Trang An Tourism Complex, a UNESCO world cultural and natural heritage site in Trang An, Vietnam. The tourism activities in Trang An are government-led which provide economic benefits to the local residents who actively participate in a wide range of tourism-related activities. But while there is a boost in the local economy, the participation of the local communities are still limited due to lack of knowledge or political interference. Following Arnstein's scale of ladder of citizen participation, the authors surmised that the higher the level of participation, specifically in tokenism and nonparticipatory level, the better the outcome of sustainable tourism.

Results of the qualitative portion of the study showed that the local people living within the heritage perimeter actively participate in the development of the local tourism activities and strongly believe that they influence the final decisions of the government. The social conditions have also significantly improved in terms of average income from tourism-related jobs, reduced poverty, and environmental protection. But all these changes are attributed to the strong role of the government and leading enterprises.

In the subsequent quantitative study, the results of the qualitative component were verified which revealed that the higher level of participation due to empowerment of the local residents can influence the tourism development in the area. Further, the living conditions in the local area became more stable and secure. Results showed that strong and active participation of the local community would be very beneficial for the sustainable development of tourism in Trang An, Vietnam. However, Nguyen, et al. emphasized that in the context of Vietnam, the local community participation is more on the tokenism level due to the very strong influence of government authorities. The authors concluded that the role of the government is crucial in engaging the local communities towards sustainable tourism development in Trang An.

In the cases presented above, community participation still plays a key role in sustainable cultural heritage tourism management. However, it remains as a challenge in balancing the needs and interests of the local communities and conservation/ sustainable use of the cultural or natural heritage resources. We hope that such findings may inspire a more focused future research on community participation in sustainable heritage tourism development and management.