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COMMUNITY CAPACITY AS AN APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

This study intends to elaborate the community capacity approaches for sustainable tourism development. Community capacity building or capacity development is an important subject in tourism as it has been focused on development practice especially in developing countries. It is also a discipline that needs more strengthening in theory. Furthermore, community capacity is an essential condition for improving the process of sustainable tourism and enhancing its benefit for local communities.

Keywords: Tourism, community capacity, sustainable development

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Introduction

The term community capacity building (CCB) is increasingly used as part of policy and programs in social welfare, education, environment, and health (Hounslow 2002). CCB as both a concept and a strategy has relevance to all local communities and to society as a whole. It is, however, most commonly applied to disadvantaged communities and population groups (Hounslow 2002). Community capacity research is grounded in the concepts of social capital, social organization and integration (Bowen et al., 2000; Bowen et al., 2003).

Until recently, the concept of CCB has been more theoretical than applied, and considered an intangible variable that was difficult to measure. Whether theoretical or actual, it has been conceptualized as mediating the effects of other variables on community (Bowen et al., 2000; Chaskin et al., 2001). CCB is recognized as an essential strategy to strengthen the well-being of individuals, families and communities, government and non government agencies (Fiona 2007). The concept of CCB has been given only limited attention in the tourism literature. This concept has, however, been extensively used in other areas of development, especially health, education and agriculture (Moscardo 2008).

Definition of Community Capacity

Fifteen years ago, the term 'community capacity building" (CCB) was not to be found anywhere within policy literature. Today it is used ubiquitously, particularly in the context of urban policy, regeneration and community development (Craig 2007). There are many definitions of CCB interpreted by researchers, practitioners and decision makers (Liou 2004). In some interpretations, CCB refers to the capabilities that exist within local communities and within the organizations, individuals and communities that strengthen individuals to define their values and capacities to act on these. A comprehensive definition of community capacity is that articulated by Goodman et al. (1998) who write: it is a process as well as

outcome; it includes supportive organizational structures and processes; it is multi-dimensional and ecological in operating at the individual, group, organizational, community levels and it is context specific (Goodman, Speers et al. 1998). However, Moscardo (2008) believed CCB can also be used for other community activities. Table 1 provides a selection of definitions of community capacity.

Table 1: Selection Definition of Community Capacity

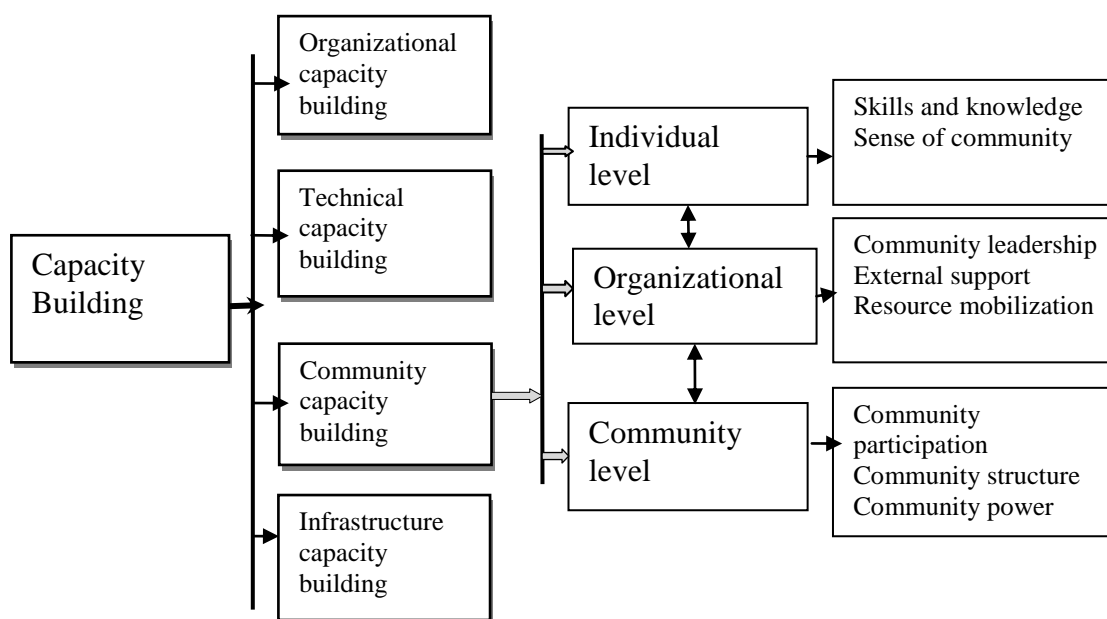| Definition	Source
Community capacity refers to the levels of competence, ability and skills necessary to set and achieve relevant goals	(Balint, 2006,)
Community capacity is the ability of individuals, organizations and communities to manage their affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain in positive change	(Hounslow 2002)
Community capacity is the degree to which a community can develop, implement and sustain actions for strengthening community health	(Smith et al., 2001)
Community capacity includes the assets and attributes that a community is able to draw upon in order to improve their lives	(Lavarack 2006)

Source: Moscardo (2008)

The Framework of Community Capacity for Sustainable Tourism

This paper intends to elaborate the framework of CCB for tourism development. Hence in this part, different views on concept and theory of community capacity will be presented. According to Howe & Cleary (2001) it is the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain change. Community capacity is an essential condition for development, implementation and maintenance of effective community development (Goodman, Speers et al. 1998). There are many models and frameworks for CCB. Frankish (2003) argues that many CCB frameworks tend to be descriptive of what might be happening if community capacity is being built. Therefore, he discusses the CCB framework at three levels - namely individual, organization

and community. Community capacity is frequently described as one component in a project of "capacity building" which the United Nations (1997) in a 1997 document labeled as an "umbrella concept". Under this umbrella, CCB is interdependent and interconnected with other types of capacity building; organizational, technical and infrastructure capacity as shown in Figure 1 below. The CCB framework was also based on Kwan et al. (2003) and was divided into three levels: organizational, community and individual. The individual level includes characteristics of local people as individuals, such as knowledge and skills. The organizational level involves characteristics referring to organizations and agencies. Community level characteristics are broader than individuals or single organizations and include informal and formal networks between organizations and between individuals and organizations in the community, the infrastructure within the community, and the networks and resources from external support to the community. Chinman et al. (2005) also conceptualized CCB at three different levels including communities, organizations and individuals. Chinman et al. (2005) used the theory of community capacity for improvement in community health. However, this theory can also be used as a strategy for sustainable tourism development planning.

Chaskin et al. (2001) present a definitional framework for CCB, which has four community level characteristics: sense of community, commitment to the community, mechanisms for problem solving and access to resources. The levels of these characteristics do not necessarily correlate with each other. For example, a community may have a significant sense of community and little access to financial resources. Figure 1 illustrates dimensions and levels of CCB.
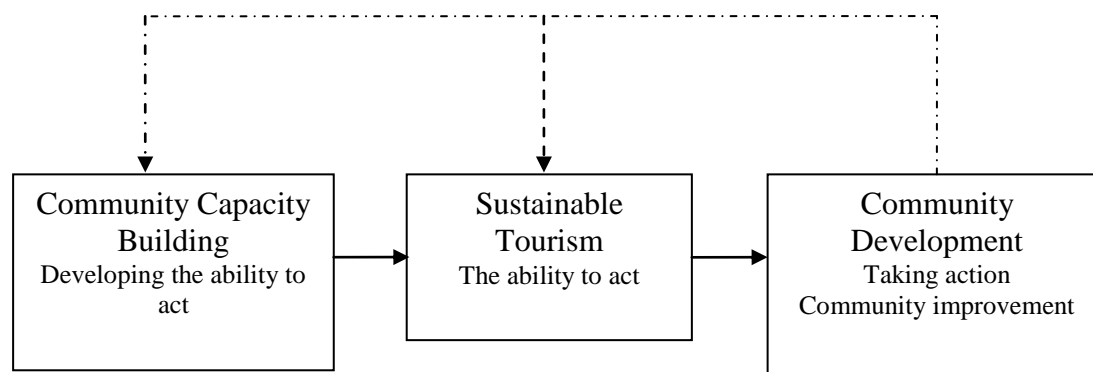
Figure 1: The Levels of Capacity Building

Approaches to Community Capacity for Sustainable Tourism

The concept of community capacity is regarded as the ability of people in local communities to do work in the social, economic and environmental context (Liou 2004). In other views CCB is seen as resource mobilization for community rather than individual benefits (Sharmalene & Maureen, 2007). In the CCB approach people are seen as having talents, resources and aspirations that are positive (McEwen and Flowers 2004). The bottom-up approach builds strength and capacity to address problems identified by the community through building community resources and community capacities (Laverack and Labonte 2000). In the bottom-up approach, external support responds to the needs of the community and community resources are managed by communities (Laverack and Labonte 2000). Although the top-down and bottom-up approaches identified by Laverack & Labonte (2000) are not necessarily mutually exclusive in practice, it can be difficult to accommodate both. Community capacity is suggested as one way to accommodate the goals of both approaches (Labonte et al., 2002). Hawe et al. (2000) also presented CCB as a continuum of activates

that cross both the top-down and bottom-up approaches described by Laverack & Labonte (2000). The process of community capacity also can be understood as embodying four different approaches: top-down approach, bottom-up approach, partnership approach and community organizing approach (Crisp, Swerissen et al. 2000). A top-down approach recognizes the importance of organizational capacity. Within this approach, building capacity is achieved through restructuring the community organizations. A bottom-up organizational approach involves the skills that benefit the individual, organizations and communities (Hall & Best, 1997). In this study, the focus of this approach is the training of tourism stakeholders. A partnership approach to CCB occurs through promoting an environment where knowledge can be exchanged (Crisp, Swerissen et al. 2000). The final approach noted by Crisp et al. (2000) is community organizing. This approach involves working with excluded community members. CCB in this approach aims to transform individuals from passive to active participants in a process of community development (Finn and Checkoway 1998). Capacity development as an approach to development brings about a few general considerations that arise out of debates regarding tourism development. CCB is a comprehensive process that involves all dimensions of community. Wilkinson (1989), stated, "community development means building the capacity of local people to work together to address their common interests". As Eade & Williams (1995) suggest, CCB is an effort to empower people in local communities. Consequently, in this study CCB is a means to sustainable tourism for community development. It empowers the individuals, organizations and communities to realize their potential and their capacities and community resources for achieving community objectives. CCB helps local communities to obtain an opportunity to achieve their community development goals. Increased capacity of the community is a result of sustainable tourism. However community capacity also refers to community development processes that focus on assets and strengths. Hence both community capacity and community development

must be participated in and driven by local communities. When community development

occurs without input from the community, often very little CCB occurs (Hackett, 2000).

Figure 2 depicts the community development chain. The figure shows that progress in the

outcome of community development also contributes to tourism development.

Figure 2: Community Development Chain adapted from Phillips & Pittman (2008)

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the influence of current literature from the fields of planning,

agriculture, and education on capacity building in tourism development. The review ensured

a better understanding of CCB in sustainable tourism, thus providing insights into the many

aspects of community development in general, and for the aims of this research the

opportunity to develop a new model of CCB base on sustainable tourism development. The

main intentions of this study were to develop indictors that would allow measurement of

individual dimensions of community capacity building. CCB is widely acknowledged as an

important strategy for sustainable tourism. CCB also is identified as one of the ways that

tourism development can be addressed. According to Smith et al. (2003, p. 45) "the primary

purpose of measuring building community capacity is to provide an assessment for local

communities to use in reflecting progress towards their stated goals". Thus the aim of

measuring CCB is to understand how it contributes to community development. Hence

measuring CCB is needed for all stakeholders to learn and understand more deeply what needs to be healed, learned or developed in order to achieve community development goals (Smith et al., 2003). However, while there is a substantial body of literature on the definition and conceptualization of CCB (Goodman, Speers et al. 1998; Chaskin, 2001; Laverack, 2001; Clinch 2004), there is very little literature, which discusses the practical application of approaches that have been successfully used to measure CCB for sustainable tourism development in local communities (Moscardo 2008). According to the literature review, this study concludes that building capacity is a way for local communities to improve their capabilities in all dimensions of sustainable tourism development. Hence, investing in local education, training and capacity building can be an effective, visible, and highly valued way for a tourism operation to contribute to local development. Findings from this study can be used as guidelines in developing scales for measuring community capacity building for sustainable tourism development.

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