Knowledge Economies, Knowledge Making, Complexity Theory, and Networks: A Balinese Experience of Participating in Sustainable Micro Tourism Developments

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Abstract

This paper narrates processes associated with the development of microtourism enterprises as one part of a broader organically determined sustainable development agenda in a north eastern coastal village in Bali. The paper's narrative is constructed from a grounded theory interpretation of various "lived experiences" (van Manen, 1990) of two Australians, and their related "autoethnographies" (Schwandt, 2001; Cloke, Crang & Goodwin, 1999; Pratt, 1992), who over time have shifted from being tourists to residents in the village. Hence forth, they will be referred to as the lived experience-ers/authethnographers.

Lived experiences and autoethnography

Both lived experiences and autoethnography are associated with interpretive approaches and so the paper contributes to understanding development, particularly, tourism development beyond post/positivistic, critical theory and participatory paradigmatic lenses. Use of "lived experience[s]" enables "a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (van Manen, 1990, p. 36), in this case, a shift from tourist to one of a number of social agents associated with self-organising sustainable micro-developments including tourism micro-developments. Complementing the use of lived experiences, is autoethnography, which is "the process by which the researcher chooses to make explicit… use of [her or his] own positionality, involvements and experiences as an integral part of ethnographic research" (Cloke, Crang & Goodwin (1999, p.333). Specifically, by focussing on lived experiences and autoethnographic experiences, the paper offers indepth understanding of how sustainable micro-development can spontaneously occur. The lived experiences and autoethnographies that inform this paper were longitudinally generated with the village from 2000 to the present.

Lived experiences, autoethnography and grounded theory

Consistent with the use of lived experiences and autoethnographies is the methodological tool of grounded theory. This tool is particularly germane because:

> "… we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and the research practices." (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10).

Grounded theory was used as the interpretive method for making sense of the lived experiences and autoethnographies. Key concepts arising from this interpretive process are identified in italics in the final section of the paper.

Social situatedness of lived experience-ers/autoethnographers

The two lived experience-ers/autoethnographers have consumed multiple tourism experiences on the island of Bali over a period of some twenty five years. These experiences include independently organised touristic experiences, independent adventure ocean cruising experiences and more recently second home ownership. In the course of their experiences, their emphasis shifted from the consumption of tourism experiences to lifestyle pursuit. Through a variety of networks, this pursuit involved them in spontaneous and organic sustainable development opportunities in the north eastern village. Their shift of focus was further precipitated by the events in Bali in October 12, 2002 and October 1, 2005, whereafter inbound tourism to Bali slumped and flow on consequences for the Balinese economy and Balinese family livelihoods plummeted. More recently, Balinese tourism has surpassed the patterns prior to 2002.

Village context

The village in which the sustainable micro-developments has taken place is constituted of approximately 400 people with strong interconnectivity and familial and generational interconnectivity, all bounded by Hindu religious and traditional customs and mores. The villagers, the village leader as well as the Orang Adat (the minder of traditional customs) assure this connectivity. There is a mix of other religions in the village. Village ages range from new bornes to the early nineties. There is, however, a population bias towards 40 years and less. Since 2000, the village has also become the site of several mass tourism developments primarily predicated on tourism activities focussing on marine experiences, especially snorkelling and scuba diving. To support these activities there has been investment in infrastructure such as restaurants as well as

toilet and shower blocks. Currently, the mass tourists are bussed in an out of the village on a daily basis. A number of villagers are employed by these activities. Aside from unexpected and unprecedented events as with other locations, mass tourism visitation ebbs and flows depending on the seasons, and holiday periods in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

A grounded theory of micro-tourism development

The grounded theory of the lived experiences and autoethnographies of the two lived experience-ers/autoethnographers emphasises a *holistic*, *organic* approach to sustainable development of which tourism is but one of the options for the villagers to consider. A holistic perspective resonates with Gunn and Var's (2002) commentary that tourism development needs to occur within the context of other development contexts, such as, economic and social.

Within this village experience, the tourism developments did not arise out of targeted community tourism development projects associated with collaboration or cooperation (Jamal and Getz, 1994). Albeit that at times these were evident, in particular, collaborations arose but not as per (Gray (1989)'s processes instead the developments were *organic*, *self organised* and *dynamic*. Their emergence was more emblematic of chaos and complexity theory as described by McKercher (1999), Faulkner and Russell (1998) and Russell and Faulkner (2004).

In the village, a number of *social agents coalesced* through *chance* encounters, which have resulted in micro-bank activities and micro-developments, for example, pumps for wells, education sponsorship, engine ownership, animal husbandry, formal and informal business training, building related projects as well as marine tourism related ventures.

Key to the development of the sustainable micro-projects was the development of *mutual respect* and *trust* founded on *authentic interactions*. Such respect and trust also established the surety for the founding of micro-bank activities. Linked to the success of the micro-projects is a continuous *reciprocal exchange of knowledge economies* between the villagers and the lived experience-ers/autoethnographers. These *exchanges* included villagers, the Orang Adat, the village head, government officials as well as formal business representatives, such as notaries. *Exchanges* occurred across a range of levels, such as, business, cultural and social levels and were associated with *knowledge* and *sense making* across the differing perspectives and *knowledge economies*. *Exchanges* occurred in Indonesian and with a number of the villagers in English. Indonesian and Balinese are the primary languages of village *exchange*.

A further element of the grounded theory is *connectivity to a number of networks*. Within the village, the networks are complex and continually be redesigned as is reflected in actor-network theory (see Jóhannesson, 2005) derived from the writings of Foucault (1995, 2003). *Networks* along with *reciprocal exchange of knowledge economies* and *knowledge making*, *respect, trust* and *authenticity* contributed to the *coalescing* of various *social agents* resulting in *self-organised* development and tourism development. While this paper has been written in the past tense, sustainable micro-projects continue to be *self-organised* by the various *social agents* and this narrative continues to be storied.

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