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### **Theoretical Approximations to Community-based Tourism: Case Studies from Costa Rica**

Recent research on community-based tourism (CBT) in Costa Rica has focused on community field theory and the theory of the strength of weak ties. The objective of the following paper is to compare these frameworks in order to better understand the explanatory power and shortcomings of each. To reach this objective, the paper presents six case studies that show how the use of both perspectives can aid in understanding CBT development. The study shows how CBT businesses, although concerned with profit making, also engage in actions that bring economic, social and environmental benefits to the community, contributing to its overall benefit.

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**Keywords:** Community-based tourism, community field theory, Costa Rica, rural tourism, strength of weak ties.

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## **Introduction**

The academic literature lacks a universally accepted definition and subsequent operationalization for *community-based tourism*. Some studies define community-based initiatives emphasizing local level stakeholder-related *processes*. These include studies focusing on levels of collaboration between different tourism-related stakeholders in the planning processes (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Reed, 1997) and the levels of involvement and participation in local tourism-related efforts (Belsky 1999; Kiss, 2004; Avila-Foucat, 2002).

Another definition, which stands out because of its focus on *outcomes*, considers whether a substantial amount of control (e.g., of decision making processes) is in the hands of residents, and whether a considerable proportion of the economic benefits from tourism stays among the residents of tourism-dependent communities (Scheyvens, 1999; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Ramsa-Yaman & Mohd, 2004; Jones, 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Hipwell, 2007; Trejos & Chiang, 2009). This latter approach to CBT does not challenge or exclude the definitions in the preceding paragraph, but in our view is more complete as processes are inherently accounted for.

Despite the difficulties in defining CBT, there is a vast array of academic literature that uses the term to describe its object of study. Many of these studies report on the benefits for local communities that emerge from CBT. These have been presented in terms of the generation of socioeconomic benefits (Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Avila-Foucat, 2002), achievement of sustainable development goals (Timothy & White, 1999; Ramsa-Yaman & Mohd, 2004; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010; Ruiz- Ballesteros, 2010), and reversing colonization processes (Hipwell, 2007) and inequalities between tourists and hosts (Wearing & McDonald, 2002).

While gaining popularity in academic circles, recognition exists that community-based tourism does not intrinsically translate into the achievement of positive local outcomes (Akama, 1996; Li, 2006; Saarinen, 2006; Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, & Schelhas, 2003). Studies have noted factors limiting the benefits that may stem from CBT. These limiting factors include skewed power relations (Reed, 1997; Belsky, 1999; Jones, 2005; Saxena & Ilbery, 2008), lack of broad involvement and participation (Sebele, 2010; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010), limited commercial success (Kiss, 2004), and the existence of significant economic leakages (Trejos & Chiang, 2009).

Thus, a need arises to better understand the factors necessary for CBT to result in positive changes for local communities. In here, we offer a framework to better understand the factors that can lead to a CBT that positively improves residents' living conditions.

#### Theoretical perspectives for understanding CBT development

Recent research on community-based tourism (CBT) in Costa Rica (Matarrita-Cascante, 2010; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010; Trejos, Huang, & Chiang, 2006; Trejos, Chiang, & Huang, 2008; Trejos & Chiang, 2009) has focused on community field theory (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991) and the strength of weak ties theory (Granovetter, 1973, 2002, 2005). The objective of the following paper is to compare such research lines in order to better understand the explanatory power and shortcomings of each theory when used for examining CBT.

To reach this objective, the paper is structured as follows. First, we present both theoretical positions with an explanation of how they have been used in the study of CBT. Second, we propose an integrated framework borrowing from both theoretical perspectives. Third, six case studies are presented to show how the use of both perspectives aids in a theoretical understanding of CBT development. Finally, conclusions and implications are provided.

## **CBT from the perspective of community field theory**

Community field theory (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991) is concerned with the interests of the residents in a community. Such interests can be driven by individualistic motives in which a person or group acts to achieve their own particular goals. Thus, from this perspective, people and/or groups interact within a community to fulfill their specific interests. On the contrary, residents or groups within a locality can interact guided by less particular interests - those seeking to benefit the community.

Such interests, according to Wilkinson (1991), define the different *social fields* in a community. A social field is a process of social interaction among actors based on the common interests they pursue. Within a community, several social fields can be identified. These social fields display their own identity and organizational structures and are often characterized by their specific interests - framed around their particular goals (Theodori, 2007). Examples of common social fields include education, environmental protection, faith-based, and recreation, among others (Theodori, 2007).

In certain localities, Wilkinson (1991) noted the existence of what he called the *community field*. This field connects the diverse types of social fields existing in a community. Further, such community field is concerned with reflecting and pursuing the common interests and needs of the community (Brennan, 2007; Brennan, Flint, & Luloff, 2009). Thus, the community field is defined by a locally oriented process of actions whose interests reflect the overall community good (Theodori, 2005). Wilkinson (1991) noted:

The community field cuts across organized groups and across other interaction fields in a local population. It abstracts and combines the locality-relevant aspects of the special interest fields, and integrates the other fields into a generalized whole. It does this by creating and maintaining linkages among fields that otherwise are directed toward more limited interests (1991, p. 33).

Because the community field can be seen as an altruistic-based effort guided by the overall community betterment, its existence enhances community well-being (Wilkinson, 1991). This is because the community-wide interests characteristic of the community field (as opposed to individualistic/particular ones), give direction to local social processes that seek democratic and well-intended goals.

Research guided by community field theory provides evidence of how communities displaying interests and behaviors common to the existence of the community field do better than those who lack its presence (Brennan, 2007; Brennan et al., 2009; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010). Hence, beyond the existence of groups in a community that seek particular goals, what is relevant, according to community field theory, is that such groups work in collaboration to reach the overall benefit of the community. This is because the community is not only benefiting from solving local problems, but in the process, people connect and build relationships and cohesion, resulting in the development of other non-tangible assets (e.g., leadership, empowerment).

One line of research has explained the development of CBT from the perspective of community field theory. Matarrita-Cascante (2010) presents evidence of the existence of community groups that guide residents towards goals that provide benefits to a tourism-based community. This study found that the existence of a community-based development association (namely ADIFORT) was key in achieving overall good for the community as it was critical to managing the changes brought by tourism-led growth. Essential variables found in the study to be associated with positive tourism-led development included open communication, widespread participation, tolerance, and communion among residents and different tourism-related stakeholders.

There are, however, two limitations to understanding CBT development from this perspective. The first one is the importance of external influences to sparking CBT initiatives. In other words, community field theory is not especially useful in explaining why people outside the community may be of special importance in the development of CBT. Community field theory, at least in its most basic form, fails to explain why actors external to the community may contribute to community-led development. To state an example, community field theory is not useful to explain the fact that ADIFORT sparked from the effort of a North American couple participating in the Peace Corps (Matarrita-Cascante, 2010, p. 1148).

A second limitation of this approach is its failure to explain how a community-based organization can at the same time perform as a community field and as a profit-seeking social field. Based on community field theory, one may posit that a community-based association is a social space for the discussion of the interests of the whole community and for taking actions that generate widespread benefits. In practice, however, this organization can perform as a private business. For example in the case of ADIFORT, this association is largely funded from entrance fees to a waterfall and the rental of properties (Matarrita-Cascante, 2010, p. 1149).

Despite the clear advantages of turning to this theory to understand and define positive community development efforts, it also has its shortcomings. As is the case with all theories, such shortcomings limit the understanding of the totality of a phenomenon such as CBT.

### **CBT from the perspective of the theory of the strength of weak ties**

Another line of recent CBT research in Costa Rica has been guided by the theory of the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). This theory stresses that weak ties (acquaintances as opposed to close friends) are vital for an individual's integration into modern socie-

ty. Weak ties are more likely to play the role of transmitting unique information across otherwise largely disconnected segments of social networks (Granovetter, 2005).

From a strategic point of view, individuals with many weak ties to the outside of destination communities can use diverse and relevant information to gain competitive advantage over other individuals (Granovetter, 2002). Individuals with few weak ties are deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will therefore be limited to locally available information and views. Groups of individuals in destination communities that lack weak ties will face difficulties in reaching a viable economic standing (Granovetter, 1983).

Following this theory, recent research has had two findings worth mentioning: 1) external linkages to outside the community help tackle some of the common problems faced by local inhabitants in the development of tourism, which include lack of essential skills, high development costs, and the dominance imposed by mass tourism operators (Trejos et al., 2008); and 2) that CBT does not only involve organizations that belong to/represent an entire community, but also include profit-seeking businesses owned by of a group of community residents (Trejos & Chiang, 2009).

The main shortcoming of the theory of the strength of weak ties in explaining CBT development is that it fails to explain how a CBT organization that has a profit-seeking activity can take actions that benefit the whole community. This theory has limitations for explaining this because it stresses individual goals while neglecting network goals. Studies such as Matarrita-Cascante (2010) and Matarrita-Cascante et al. (2010) prove otherwise. In positive cases of CBT, interaction within the community promotes efforts that go beyond individualistic interests and seek overall community betterment. Trejos et al.'s (2008) study focuses on networking between community-based associations and a wide array of organizations external to the community, while ignoring a vital part of the CBT network: the local residents and organizations in tourism-based communities. Trejos and Chiang's (2009) study in the



rural community of Chira Island, Costa Rica ignores the existence of a community field and shows internal community linkages as a series of mostly self-interested economic exchanges. Therefore, the theory of the strength of weak ties, at least in its most simple form, views a local community as a given, instead of as a process of social interaction that goes beyond the sum of binary relations between individual actors.

### **An integrated perspective**

The integrated perspective we propose for the understanding of CBT development involves alternating the use of the two theories to better understand the complexity of the phenomenon. Social reality can be approached from many different theoretical perspectives, each with its own explanatory power and shortcomings. Therefore, using a combination of different theories to interpret field results will aid in overcoming the blind spots of each single-theory perspective. Nonetheless, the problem with a multiple-theory approach is that different perspectives at times contradict each other.

To state an example of these contradictions, community field theory posits that the community field is a process towards overall community good, an idea reminiscent of Parson's (1991) concept of "collective goals". Conversely, from the perspective of the theory of the strength of weak ties it is not possible to determine what direction constitutes the overall community good, since a chosen direction may be convenient for some individuals in detriment of others.

On the other hand and following Granovetter (1983) citing Durkeim, the theory of the strength of weak ties values individualism so there are no "collective goals", but only individual goals that may coincide and thus lead to cooperation between individuals. From this perspective, one may ask who defines so-called "collective goals" and with what purpose?

This leads to a discussion of power within community members since those members with more power will be able to impose their own goals and justify them as collective goals.

Therefore, we do not aspire for a unified theory that will be able to join both theories into an integrated model. Instead, we recommend the use of alternative theories at different times during the interpretation of the results, so as to have several parallel attempts of placing field results into theory-led categories. Each of these attempts will have different strengths and weaknesses, but a combination of them will give us a better picture of reality than a single-theory perspective.

Despite difficulties in fitting these two theories into an integrated model, a deeper understanding of CBT requires recognition of the findings in both lines of research. While it is important to recognize the importance of the community field for CBT development, studies should not neglect the importance of external linkages and individual goals. The case studies that follow try to integrate these two perspectives in an attempt to answer two questions: In what ways does a community-based tourism (CBT) policy help rural communities improve their way of life? How are benefits from a CBT business shared with the community it is embedded in?

In order to reach this objective, we will continue from the results of Trejos et al. (2008), which shows a description of the CBT support network and its link to CBT organizations from the perspective of the theory of the strength of weak ties. This previous study, however, lacks a description of the linkages between these CBT organizations and the local community, since its theory-led methodology did not consider this relevant. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to use an alternate theory (community field theory) to analyze how the CBT businesses portrayed in the previous paper are linked to the communities in which they are located, and to provide evidence for the types of benefits they produce. Six cases from rural Costa Rica were studied with a qualitative approach. The same field results were

used, but now with a different theoretical perspective to see if we can have a more complete understanding of the observed phenomenon.

## **Methodology**

The results included in this paper are an extension of previous work (Trejos et al., 2006, 2008; Trejos & Chiang, 2009). Six community-based tourism organizations were studied, in order to cover different types of CBT organizations (see Table 1). In 2007, in-depth recorded interviews were conducted with key informants from 6 CBT organizations. Questions were related to the contacts between the CBT organization and other social groups and individuals both outside and within the community. The variables included frequency of communication and the nature of the contacts (e.g., what was given, received or exchanged). Information from the interviews was triangulated with secondary data and field observation.

The main results from this research were presented in Trejos et al. (2008), which explains how a support network external to the community aids CBT organizations with the intention of converting them into viable tourism businesses. Furthermore, Trejos and Chiang (2009) reported that these community-based organizations only account for a small part of the community, but their study does not present evidence on how NGO or government support for a private business in the hands of a few local people can benefit a rural community as a whole. Since the theory of the strength of weak ties does not focus on community-wide goals, the field results that would support such a claim were hindered in these previous papers. The objective of the present paper is to fill this gap, by analyzing how these CBT organizations are linked to the rural community in which they are located, using the same dataset but with a different theoretical perspective.

Using a community field theory perspective leads to a guiding question that was not considered in these previous papers: How are the benefits from CBT businesses shared with

the community in which they are embedded in when they are owned and managed by a few members of the community and represent only a small portion of it? In this way, we can evaluate if these organizations are contributing to the existence of a community field. During fieldwork, interviewees from each CBT organization were also asked, “how does your project benefit the community?” This question was included in the questionnaire, but not in previous publications from this dataset because the authors were not able to tie the results to a theory of the strength of weak ties perspective.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of studied CBT organizations.

Organization name	Name of tourism project	Location	Type of organization	Number of members	Number of employees
Coopesilencio	<i>Albergue El Silencio</i>	Savegre, Aguirre	Self-managed cooperative	43 (4♀)	12 (10♀)
Coopeuvita	<i>Hotel Canto de Ballena</i>	Bahia Ballena, Osa	Cooperative	67 (20%♀)	7 permanent (5♀) 12 occasional (12♀)
ADESSARU	<i>Nacientes Palmichal</i>	Palmichal, Acosta	Environmental group	53 (25♀)	7 (5♀)
Chira Island Women's Association	<i>La Amistad Lodge</i>	Chira, Puntarenas	Women's group	4♀	5 (4♀) plus occasional employees
Stibrawpa	<i>Casa de las Mujeres</i>	Bratsi, Talamanca	Indigenous organization	30 (10♀)	25 active members (10♀)
ABIPA	<i>Albergue Heliconias</i>	Bijagua, Upala	Farmer's association	11 families	9 (4♀)

Source: Interviews with representatives from each organization.

## Results

### 1. Coopesilencio

Coopesilencio is an agricultural self-managed cooperative closely linked to the rural community where it is located, and to its main activity: the cultivation of oil palm. Its history is related to the struggles for land characteristic of the 1970s, which has fueled a tightly-knit

community. It is located in the lower Savegre river basin, which features attractions such as natural pools and waterfalls (Cruz & Solano, 2007).

Coopesilencio has a wide ownership that includes a considerable amount of community residents (43 associates). Moreover, the 12 employees in the tourism project (*El Silencio Lodge*) are all local. Additionally, the tourism project gives the community a sustainability status that helps bring resources from other international cooperation projects, such as a wild-life rescue center and an environmental education classroom. The association captures funds (e.g., donations) from various sources which are used for environmental or social purposes (or both).

## **2. Coopeuvita**

Coopeuvita is an agricultural cooperative that has a hotel as a subsidiary tourism venture (*Canto de Ballena Beach Hotel*). The hotel is located in a 100 km<sup>2</sup> property near the town of Bahia Uvita, Puntarenas. It is promoted and widely known as “an environmental-friendly project of community-based rural tourism” (GECR, 2009), since the hotel is located near the entrance to the *Ballena* (Whale) Marine National Park.

According to the representative of the cooperative interviewed, the money earnings from the hotel are not distributed among shareholders. Instead, they are given to an education and welfare fund “that benefits the whole community”.

## **3. ADESSARU**

ADESSARU (*Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de San José Rural*, Rural San Jose Sustainable Development Association) is an environmental organization that owns an ecotourism lodge. The lodge facilities and their private reserve are located in Palmichal, Acosta, a mountainous area at 1325 meters above sea level. The lodge is surrounded by fo-

rests that protect the Tabarcia River. ADESSARU was created in 1991 when a group of fifteen neighbors from Palmichal and nearby communities organized themselves into an environmental group to protect the water sources and the forests on the upper river basin of the Negro and Tabarcia rivers. Their objective was to encourage conservation habits within the local population. The Lodge offers rural tourism attractions, in which the tourist is able to visit coffee, fruit, butterfly and dairy farms, and experience the life of local farmers on a normal work day (ADESSARU, 2009).

ADESSARU makes an effort to buy all their supplies locally, although these are sometimes more expensive than buying them in San Jose (the capital city of Costa Rica). According to a representative of this organization, they are much more concerned about the welfare of the community (e.g., environmental conservation) than they are about making a profit. Moreover, the tourism project is only part of a multi-component strategy for the conservation of water sources for many communities downstream.

#### **4. Chira Island Women's Association**

*La Amistad (Friendship)* lodge was created in 2000 by the Women's Association of Chira Island (*Asociación de Damas Isla de Chira*) with the aim of generating an alternative income for the women of Chira, who traditionally dedicated themselves to fishing. The Lodge is located in Chira Island, the biggest island in the largest gulf in Costa Rica, the Nicoya Gulf. Furthermore, this island is the only one in the Gulf with basic services such as electricity, medical attention and schools. Approximately half of the island is protected mangrove forest. In Chira tourists can enjoy various geographical features such as the forest, coastline and wetlands. There are different activities of interest to visitors such as adventure sports, biking, environmental education, research, volunteering, nature-watching, hiking, fishing and visits to conservation projects (Rainforest Alliance, 2009).

This organization also makes an effort to buy their supplies from local businesses. The representative also stated that their organization collaborates with local fishermen organizations because the latter use their lodge facilities for their meetings. The lodge then has another function besides attention to tourists: linking community residents to other parts of society. The Association also collaborates financially when the local elementary school has special needs (e.g., a photocopier). Their representative also claimed that their project has had an empowering effect on the women of the community.

## **5. Stibrawpa**

Stibrawpa is an indigenous organization linked to the community of Yorkin, near the Panama border. Since there is no road to access this community, its residents use dugout canoes from the town of Bambu via the Sixaola and Yorkin River and passing primary forests on both sides. *Casa de las Mujeres* (Women's house) is the name of the tourism project where visitors can share traditional ways of cocoa bean harvesting and processing. They can also learn about the cultivation of bananas, heart of palm and *Pejibaye*, a local specialty (Cruz & Solano, 2007).

According to interviewees, employment in the tourism project is rotational, which means that members of the organization take turns for the attention of tourists. Each day that they attend to tourists, a different family will prepare the meals and will receive the profit from that day's work. There is some luck in the distribution of the benefits, as there may be a variable number of tourists arriving on any specific date, but the system is designed for every family to have an opportunity to make a profit while making sure everyone does their share of the work.

## **6. ABIPA**

Heliconias Lodge is located in the foothills of the Tenorio Volcano in Northern Costa Rica. This eco-lodge offers views over the town of Bijagua and Lake Nicaragua. From the Lodge, tourists can travel 5 km of trails extending through 730 km<sup>2</sup> of protected rainforest while observing birds, butterflies and bromeliads; they can also travel to a nearby popular attraction called *Rio Celeste* (literally *Sky-Blue River* due to the color of the water) or tour of the local area including an organic farm, a butterfly garden, a waterfall and the tallest tree in the region. Ecotourism projects include planting trees with the local youth cooperative members in order to offset carbon emissions and engage in carbon neutral tourism (ABIPA, 2009).

Heliconias Lodge is owned and managed by locals who are tourism pioneers in the Tenorio and Upala region, engaging in ecotourism for over fifteen years. They promote themselves as “committed to sustainable development” and providing “employment and development opportunities for residents of the community while sharing their knowledge and traditions with visitors from all over the world” (ABIPA, 2009). Only two members of the association manage the tourism project, but according to the interviewee, it is a pioneer project in a burgeoning tourism destination, which can receive further benefits from tourism.

## **Discussion**

Using community field theory in addition to the theory of the strength of weak ties allows us to bring forward aspects that were hindered in previous publications. As noted in the presentation of the results, CBT organizations have various ways in which they could contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the communities in which they are embedded. Table 2 presents a summary of these possible benefits, classified into three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. The findings are congruent with Matarrita-Cascante et al.’s (2010) classification of sustainable practices resulting from CBT development, another research guided by community field theory.



**Table 2.** Possible benefits from CBT

Dimension	Possible benefits from CBT
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local employment generation for rural community residents</li> <li>- Reducing economic leakages to outside the community</li> <li>- Self-reliance from buying locally produced goods</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Empowerment of women and indigenous groups</li> <li>- Improving decisionmaking and the capacity to direct change</li> <li>- Financial collaboration to educational or welfare activities</li> <li>- Fostering social linkages to outside the community (the infrastructure is used as a meeting place between local residents and people from outside the community)</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental education for local residents</li> <li>- Local resource conservation in rural areas</li> </ul>

After the use of community field theory (instead of the theory of the strength of weak ties) to interpret the data collected, can we say that these organizations contribute to the community field? Despite methodological limitations such as over-reliance on interviewees from inside the CBT organizations, Table 2 summarizes the evidence of altruistic-based interests/efforts aimed at overall community betterment. As noted, these organizations are fulfilling roles that go beyond their individual goals (e.g., money-making function of a hospitality and tourism-related business).

Such organizations contribute time, infrastructure, and personnel in the promotion of social, environmental, and economic goals that better the community. For example, lodging facilities owned by the CBT organizations studied here were used not only to attend to tourists, but also as a meeting place for local residents and extra-local visitors for the development of collaborative projects. These initiatives eventually promoted the establishment of multiple links to outside the community. The existence of both profit-seeking and community development functions within a single CBT project can be understood from the integrated perspective explained in this paper, while individually both community field and the theory of the strength of weak ties fall short in explaining this phenomenon.

Further, CBT projects can also provide rural communities with a sustainability status that traditional agricultural or extractive activities cannot provide. In other words, it is easier to get attention and eventually money from external funding sources if a rural community has a flagship project (e.g., ecotourism). In this way, CBT projects help bring resources from international cooperation projects. According to what we found in the field, successful CBT businesses were able to link themselves to an array of funding sources. In order to do this, they must be able to speak in the terms that these aid organizations want to hear, such as environmental conservation or community-wide benefits. For example, both ADESSARU and Coopesilencio have received funding for infrastructure from organizations that are interested in environmental conservation. Although this infrastructure is used for multiple purposes (e.g., as a general meeting and gathering place), it is known as the “environmental classroom” and the “Center for Environmental Education” respectively.

Outside funding agencies, whether aimed at environmental or social purposes, are interested in generalized community betterment and not just helping a few individuals in detriment of others, so the development of the community field is important for the latter. Therefore, there seems to be a positive connection between community field and outside linkage development.

The wide array of possible benefits from CBT shows that a purely economic approach to its study may not be advisable. Further research may focus on how these different benefits are perceived by community residents. Another direction for further exploration is a deeper analysis of the functions that these lodges may have for the community. Notwithstanding, it is clear that defining a CBT organization only as a for-profit business may leave many important aspects of its operation unconsidered.

## **Conclusions**

This study suggests that CBT businesses, although concerned with making a profit, also take actions that benefit the community as a whole and therefore contribute to the community field (Wilkinson, 1991). Do our findings call for a reconceptualization of CBT? Defining it in terms of the amount of control and a considerable proportion of the economic benefits is still recommended. Our research validates this definition, yet further explains how this process takes place.

The present study shows how two research lines can complement each other for a better understanding of CBT development. For example, if we only use the theory of the strength of weak ties to explain CBT development, the existence and importance of efforts towards community-wide betterment are hindered. On the other hand, relying too much on community field theory may obscure the importance of linkages to outside the community for the development of CBT.

This does not mean, however, that there is an absence of contradictions between these theories. Are CBT organizations concerned with earning profit for some residents of the community and linked to an economic chain of tourism-related businesses, or are they places for social interaction that benefit the community as a whole? This research shows that there may be partial truth in both asseverations.

From both community field theory and theory of the strength of weak ties perspectives, we have focused on the existence of specific relationships at a given time rather than the process of their formation. Future theoretical efforts may want to incorporate a diachronic approach, which may involve an explanation of the evolution of networks and the formation of the community field.

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