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STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Christina Aas

Merkantilt Institutt, Norway

Adele Ladkin**John Fletcher**

Bournemouth University, UK

Abstract: This article examines a collaborative approach to the relationship between heritage management and tourism development in Luang Prabang, Laos. The purpose is to examine stakeholder collaboration and management roles as well as the interdependence of the heritage conservation and tourism development. The research examines a UNESCO/Norwegian government project, aiming to promote collaboration between heritage conservation and tourism through stakeholder involvement. Five aspects are explored: channels of communication between the heritage and the tourism groups, generating income for heritage conservation and management, involving the local community in decisionmaking, involving the local community in tourism activities, and an assessment of the extent and success of stakeholder collaboration. **Keywords:** stakeholder collaboration, heritage management, Laos. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Collaboration des parties intéressées et gestion du patrimoine. Cet article examine une approche collaborative envers la relation entre la gestion du patrimoine et le développement du tourisme à Luang Prabang, au Laos. Le but est d'examiner la collaboration des parties intéressées et les rôles de sa gestion ainsi que l'interdépendance entre la préservation du patrimoine et le développement du tourisme. La recherche examine un projet de l'UNESCO et du gouvernement norvégien visant à promouvoir la collaboration entre la préservation du patrimoine et le tourisme à travers la participation des parties intéressées. Cinq aspects sont explorés: les voies de communication entre les groupes représentant le patrimoine et le tourisme, la génération de revenus pour la préservation du patrimoine et sa gestion, la participation de la communauté locale dans la prise de décisions, la participation de la communauté locale aux activités du tourisme et une évaluation de l'étendue et du succès de la collaboration des parties intéressées. **Mots-clés:** collaboration des parties intéressées, gestion du patrimoine, Laos. © 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Heritage tourism is an expanding market that assumes the values of a desirable product and thus whose importance for tourism development cannot be ignored (Prentice 1993a; Prentice 1993b). While this

Christina Aas is Senior Lecturer in Tourism at Merkantilt Institutt (P.O. Box 5875, Majorstua, 0308 Oslo, Norway. Email <aaschr@mi.no>. **Adele Ladkin** and **John Fletcher** are Professors of Tourism at the Bournemouth University International Center for Tourism and Hospitality Research. Each has extensive experience in a variety of tourism projects, with a current research interest in ways of implementing sustainable development through stakeholder collaboration.

alternative provides economic opportunities for many culture-rich destinations, it may also represent a threat in terms of the potential degradation of a heritage and thus depriving a community of such resources and the benefits of tourism. The relationship between heritage and tourism is frequently characterized by contradictions and conflicts whereby conservationists perceive heritage tourism as compromising conservation goals for profit (Nuryanti 1996). In order to minimize these threats, there is a need for dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration among the various stakeholders involved. If a common ground between the different interested parties can be found, then heritage tourism can be developed in a way that preserves the resources of the local community and is beneficial to all.

Set against this background, the research here represents a critical assessment of a UNESCO/Norwegian government-sponsored pilot project at the World Heritage Site of Luang Prabang, Laos, that aimed to synthesize heritage conservation and tourism development through stakeholder collaboration. The project officially ended in December 2001. With the intention of enhancing collaboration between those with tourism interests and those involved in heritage conservation, UNESCO RACAP (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific), and the Norwegian government joined forces to launch a three-year project in December 1998 called "Cultural Heritage Management and Tourism: Models for Cooperation among Stakeholders".

The project was designed to implement models for the preservation of heritage and the development of tourism as a local resource. The implementation was intended to form mutually beneficial alliances that were both economically profitable and socially acceptable to local inhabitants and all other parties, a philosophy well in line with the objectives of Agenda 21 (WTTC 1996). Nine pilot sites were involved in the project in Asia and the Pacific, and this research explores one of these sites.

The rationale for undertaking this research is that it presents a unique case study where two current themes relating to tourism development can be explored. The first theme is that collaboration and stakeholder involvement in the development process are increasingly being used in developing countries (Reed 1999; Timothy 1999) and Luang Prabang provides an opportunity to explore this issue in a country currently in the early stages of development. The second theme is the relationship between heritage management and the growth of tourism. The importance of preserving cultural heritage through tourism is receiving increasing attention (Garrod and Fyall 2000) and has been discussed in relation to sustainable tourism (Cope 1995; Johnson and Thomas 1995; Van der Borg, Costa and Gotti, 1996). In this respect, Luang Prabang presents an area where the symbiosis of these two elements is being sought, and lessons can be learned from these experiences that may be of value for future collaborative efforts.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine two kinds of theoretical ideals, stakeholder collaboration and managing heritage tourism development in relation to a study where these issues lie at the heart

of the tourism development approach. In doing so, the paper presents the theoretical underpinning of the research in terms of the role of stakeholder involvement in development, an examination of the interdependence between heritage and tourism, and the role that stakeholders can play in developing this relationship. Research findings are presented in order to determine whether or not the project's objectives were met in terms of establishing channels of communication among the various stakeholders in the conservation sector, generating income for them and management, involving the local community in decisionmaking concerning tourism development and heritage conservation issues, involving the local community in tourism activities and the extent of stakeholder collaboration. These findings indicate the scope and extent of collaboration in the project.

COLLABORATION IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM

The fragmented nature of the tourism industry creates a recognized need for coordination and collaboration in planning (Hall 2000; Hall 1994; Roberts and Simpson 1999) and many different stakeholders have interests in the tourism planning process (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002). Cooperation and collaboration are major issues in the planning arena. They have been linked to the idea of sustainable tourism development (Bramwell and Lane 1999; Hall 2000; Selin 1999; Timothy 1999), and, in the context of community-based tourism, to integration and participation (Mitchell and Reid 2001; Tosun 2000). Critical to the implementation of the collaborative planning approach is the identification and legitimization of all potential stakeholders, including those who are involved in the planning process (Roberts and Simpson 1999). In destinations experiencing emerging tourism development where interests are not collectively organized, the identification of stakeholders is a complicated task (Reed 1997).

The basic objective is to involve all those affected by the proposed tourism development within the planning process (Jamal and Getz 1995; Mowforth and Munt 1998; Wahab and Pigram 1997). Indeed, bringing various interests together is the first stage in establishing an effective collaborative process (Timothy 1998). While there are many definitions of stakeholders and collaboration, it may be looked upon as

a process of joint decisionmaking among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain. (Jamal and Getz 1995:188).

A further complication is the extent to which the stakeholders involved can represent the local community. Part of this problem lies in the definition of the term "community", which is elusive and vague (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1988). A community can be defined most usefully for tourism in terms of a geographical area, or a group of people with shared origins or interests. If the geographical definition is used, then the community can be defined as citizens within a

given locality. If the common interest approach is taken, the business sector is often used to represent the local community, with bias towards economic factors.

Despite these difficulties, the advantages of reaching a consensus within the tourism development process are many. Such a practice tends to avoid the cost of resolving conflicts in the long term (Yuksel, Bramwell and Yuksel, 1999) and mutual participation can provide cost effective solutions by pooling resources (Bramwell and Lane 1999; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Healey 1997). A further advantage is that stakeholder collaboration adheres to the concept of democracy and Agenda 21 and thus legitimizes activity (WTTC 1996). Politically the collaboration process is more equitable than the conventional approach, as the views of stakeholders are as legitimate as those of an expert (Bramwell and Lane 1999; Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Hall 2000; Hall 1999). Furthermore, it makes use of local knowledge to make sure that decisions are well-informed and appropriate (Yuksel et al. 1999). This adds value by building on the store of knowledge, insights, and capabilities of stakeholders (Bramwell and Lane 1999; Gray 1989; Healey 1997) and gives a voice to those who are most affected by tourism.

A stakeholder has been defined as a person who has the right and capacity to participate in the process; thus, anyone who is impacted upon by the action of others has a right to be involved (Gray 1989). In this context, a stakeholder in the tourism industry is deemed to be anyone who is impacted on by development positively or negatively, and as a result it reduces potential conflict between the tourists and host community by involving the latter in shaping the way in which tourism develops (Swarbrooke 1999; Bramwell and Lane 1999). An additional argument for collaboration is that it engages all interested parties in the decisionmaking process by allowing them to take responsibility, enhance their self-reliance, and their own awareness of the issues—all of which enables them to enjoy a greater degree of consensus and shared ownership (Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell 1999).

Set against the positive factors, there are a number of negative aspects and challenges to the development of collaboration. These include the added cost to planning and development (Marien and Pizam 1997; Swarbrooke 1999), the identification of legitimate stakeholders (Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Reed 1999; Tosun 2000), and the capacity of the stakeholders to participate (Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell 1999; Reed 1997; Simmons 1994). Expectations may be raised beyond what can realistically be delivered (Gray 1989), and the power often sits with an established local elite and/or those most “vocal”; the silent majority and any local minorities may often be superseded (Hall 1999; Tosun 2000; Tosun 1998; Taylor 1995).

Addressing power imbalances is well documented by a number of authors (Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Brohman 1996; Jamal and Getz 1995; Marien and Pizam 1997; Roche 1997; Stolton and Dudley 1999; Tosun 2000). In addition, not all interested parties may have the required capability to be involved (Reed 1997) which is a particularly

significant problem in less developed countries where expertise might not be available (Brohman 1996). Furthermore, a major criticism of stakeholder involvement is that collaboration theory rests upon the assumption that simply by involving all of the interested parties, that power imbalances can be overcome. This ignores the fundamental constraint of the distribution of power and resource flows (Healey 1998; Reed 1997; Yuksel et al. 1999).

Furthermore, it is important to understand how collaboration works in different cultural and political contexts (Stolton and Dudley 1999). Tosun (2000) found that, in the context of developing countries, there are operational, structural, and cultural limits to community participation. Although not all of these barriers may be present in a destination at any one time, they can be significant difficulties in the implementation of a collaborative approach (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002).

The commitment to implementing a collective planning approach is reflected in the development of techniques that measure the extent of collaboration. Butler (1999), Bramwell and Sharman (1999), Jamal and Getz (1995), Mandell (1999) and Timothy (1998) all successfully conceptualized the different stages. While a detailed examination of these measurements is beyond the scope of this paper and has been discussed elsewhere (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002), essentially each involves a measure to analyze the stages of involvement and network structures that can be used to measure the extent of collaboration. In the wider arena beyond tourism, the fundamental work of Arnstein (1969) provides a “ladder of citizen participation” in which levels of participation are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of a citizen’s power in determining a plan or program. In Arnstein’s model, citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power, and it is the redistribution of authority that enables those citizens who have been previously excluded from political and economic processes to be included in the future (Arnstein 1969). More recently, Rocha (1997) explores empowerment using the ladder analogy—to clarify the conflicting information on empowerment theory, assisting practitioners and communities to clarify and realize their own goals relating to empowerment. A ladder of community participation specifically for underdeveloped countries has been put forward by Guaraldo Choguill (1996), based on the degree of the external institutional involvement in terms of facilitating or carrying out community mutual-help projects.

The Interdependence between Heritage and Tourism

The relationship between heritage and tourism is well documented (Ashworth 2000; Garrod and Fyall 2000; Prentice 1993a; 1993b) and it is generally assumed that culture and tourism are interdependent (Ashworth 1993). Tourism to sites of cultural and natural significance has existed at least since the time of Greek antiquity as reflected by the Hellenistic world’s invention of the Seven Wonders of the World

(NWHO 1999). The growing interest in cultural resources opens new perspectives for the economy in culturally rich destinations which in turn provide the tourism industry with challenges of managing heritage facilities and attractions, and for public agencies (Jansen-Verbeke and Livois 1999). Despite the relationship between heritage and tourism, there is recognition that the ideological and institutional context of heritage tourism is fundamentally different from that of general tourism (Garrod and Fyall 2000).

The approach of heritage organizations is to protect and preserve, while tourism has the overriding aim of becoming a profitable business. Therefore, the management is often characterized by a series of conflicts where conservationists perceive heritage tourism as compromising conservation goals for the benefit of profit (Nuryanti 1996). There is also reluctance by some managers to accept that heritage can be given an economic value. Garrod and Fyall (2000) identify two main reasons why this is likely to be the case. The first is the association of pricing with commodification and that heritage cannot have a measurable commercial economic value (Newby 1994). The second is the managers' ideals of the mission of the heritage sector whereby nobody should be excluded from the experience of visiting heritage sites on the grounds of cost (Curtis 1998; Leask and Golding 1996).

However, irrespective of the opinions of the different interest groups, the high costs involved in the conservation of cultural heritage make the revenue from tourism indispensable. Furthermore, the dynamism of culture in its different forms and expressions finds both incentives and genuine support in tourism (NWHO 1999). Consequently, the perceived mutual benefits drive both sectors towards common economic goals, and tourism, at least theoretically, offers the opportunity to generate income for the local community while simultaneously supporting the preservation of its culture (Peters 1999).

Fundamental to developing a successful symbiotic relationship between tourism and heritage is the need to involve all stakeholders in the development of the cultural resource, as there is a recognition that many of the problems are due to a lack of interaction (Hall and McArthur 1998). The concept of stakeholders is becoming increasingly important in heritage management and planning, especially the community as owner and custodian of heritage (Nuryanti 1996; Peters 1999; Serageldin 1986). It is crucial that managers involve the community to increase the quality of planning and reduce the likelihood of conflict, to ensure that sound plans remain intact over time, increase the community's ownership of its heritage through education and other awareness creating campaigns, and to enhance the community's trust in heritage management (Hall and McArthur 1998).

The tourism/heritage relationship includes several challenges. First, there is a clear need to establish channels of communication, as a lack of them provides a pathway towards uncontrolled and destructive development (Peters 1999). Butler (1999) proposes five levels of participation and decisionmaking power, ranging from the least to the most involvement. These are imposition, petition, advice, representation,

and equality. Second, there is the need to find the balance between conservation and the use of heritage sites for tourism. The widespread belief that the development of heritage sites for tourism purposes results in the commodification of culture is a legitimate concern (Wall 1997). Third is the issue of tourism activities generating income for heritage conservation. Tourism is perceived to be one of the core income-generating activities for many heritage sites.

However, the upkeep and management of the sites are often enormous and most of the money from tourist admissions often finds its way into other government projects (Tosun 2000). This, combined with global economic changes reducing state revenues, results in a need to find additional sources of income (for example, visitor centers with shops and a restaurant and sponsorship). Responding to these challenges, new actors from the nongovernmental and private sectors are playing a greater role and there is expanding participation by the local population (Stolton and Dudley 1999). There is still the issue of optimizing the economic benefits for the local community from the tourism/heritage relationship. It has been questioned whether tourism actually supports and contributes to the resources on which it depends (Peters 1999). Stakeholder involvement by the local community in the planning process is seen as one of the ways in which this can be achieved (Russo, Boniface and Shoval, 2001).

Case Study of Luang Prabang

Laos in South-East Asia is a landlocked, mountainous country divided into 16 provinces (Adams, Geok and Lin 2001). It has a population of 5.5 million comprising some 68 different ethnic groups (Hall and Page 2000). Since 1975, Laos has been a communist state and with an estimated per capita income of US\$ 241 in 1999 is one of the world's poorest nations. Agriculture dominates the economy (although less than 10% of the land is suitable for this purpose), health care is poorly developed, and illiteracy rates are high. Some 70% of the land mass is mountains and high plateaus. The Annamite Mountains run the length of the country as does the Mekong River, which is the major north-south transport artery as well as a means of irrigation.

In order to encourage economic development, the Laos government has attached great importance to tourism since opening the country to foreigners in 1989 and has been actively seeking to encourage foreign investment in tourism (Hall and Page 2000). Laos received 737,208 tourists in the year 2000, an 83% increase since 1996. The government has recognized the need for ecotourism and high value cultural tourism so as to avoid the mistakes of its Asian neighbours (Hall and Page 2000). The current plans stress sustainable and socially responsible tourism development. However, Laos faces numerous difficulties related to tourism which are linked to the wider problems of economic development. These include poor transport and other infrastructure, a dispersed population (less than 15% living in towns), a lack of skilled

human resources, and a lack of tourism facilities including international-calibre accommodations.

One of the key tourism attractions within Laos is Luang Prabang, designated as a World Heritage Site in 1995. This town of architectural, cultural, and religious significance contains, among others, the temple Wat Xieng Thong, built in 1559. The justification for World Heritage designation is that Luang Prabang reflects

the exceptional fusion of traditional architecture and urban structure built by the 19th and 20th century European colonial rulers, illustrating a key stage in the blending of these two distinct cultural traditions (Eliot, Bickersteth and Gardner, 1999:6).

The UNESCO report identified 34 *wats* (monasteries) and 111 civic buildings for preservation, and classifies another 450 houses, making Luang Prabang the best-preserved traditional town of Southeast Asia (Englemann 1999). Under the UNESCO plan, there are three zones for preservation: the old town, a peripheral building zone in today's town with another across the Mekong, and natural zones along the Mekong and Nam Khan riverbanks. Statistics show that there has been an 850% increase in tourist arrivals to Luang Prabang from 1996 to 2000 (National Tourism Authority of Laos 2001). The accommodation stock is mainly small hotels and guesthouses but also includes two modern hotel resorts, each with 80 rooms, that were recently opened south of the town.

The *Maison du Patrimoine* (Heritage House), established in 1996, plays a key role in the restoration of the architectural heritage in Luang Prabang. It brings together several government ministries, and attracts sizable funding from the French government (ADF-Agence du developement Francaise) and the European Union. No building work can be carried out in the protected zone without permission from the Heritage House, and the people of Luang Prabang can come for help and advice on building and repairing housing (Englemann 1999). The town of Chinon in Central France also assists the development and restoration of the town, and the town's mayor has lobbied for Luang Prabang at the international level. The dominance of cultural attractions in Luang Prabang make it an ideal site in which to study the development of heritage tourism.

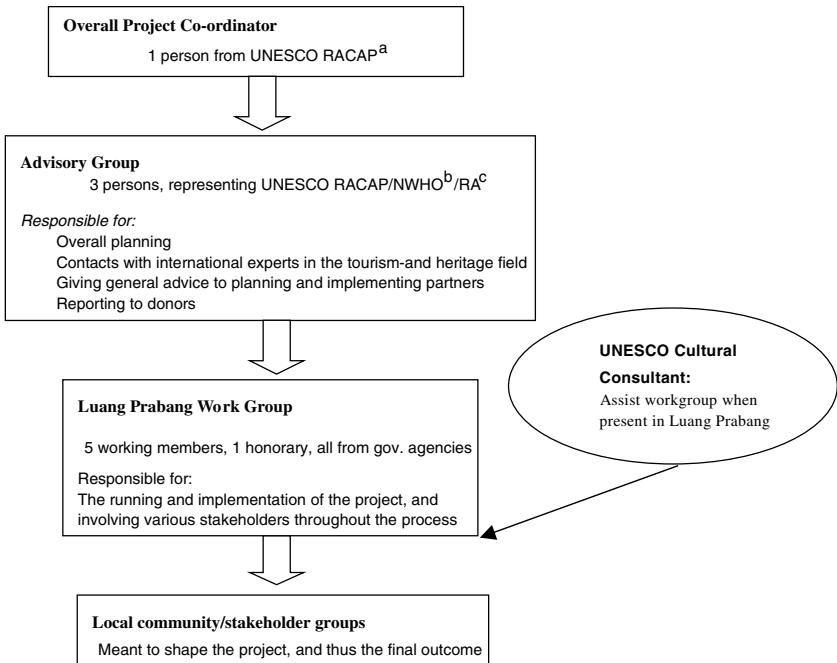
The Stakeholder Project

Luang Prabang is one of nine World Heritage pilot sites in Asia and the Pacific for the UNESCO project "Cultural Heritage Management and Tourism: Models for Cooperation among Stakeholders". The project is funded by the Norwegian government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and has additional funding from the UNESCO World Heritage Fund (training and assistance grant).

The project's stakeholders and beneficiaries are communities and individuals living in and around heritage sites, local officials

responsible for safeguarding and conservation of cultural property, tourists to heritage sites, and the sustainable tourism industry (UNESCO 1998). Representatives from the local community as defined by a geographical area are classified as one of the stakeholder groups.

The project adopts an approach in line with the local Agenda 21 strategy, by creating and implementing action plans for the sustainable management of heritage and tourism at the community level. A stakeholder workgroup was established to be responsible for the running and implementation of the project. This group consisted of the Mayor of Luang Prabang, the Deputy Foreign Affairs Officer, the Head of Tourism, the Section Head of the Department of Information and Culture, the Head of the Department of Construction, and the Secretary General of the UNESCO National Commission of Laos. In spite of such a broad spectrum of officialdom, each of the group members has a full time job outside of the project. The latter member lives and works in the capital Vientiane and is more of an honorary member than an active member of the work group. The administrative structure of the Stakeholder Project in Luang Prabang is shown in Figure 1.



^aUnited National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific

^bNordic World Heritage Office, later renamed Nordic World Heritage Foundation

^cRikantikvaren, National Heritage Authority, Norway

Figure 1. The Administrative Structure of the Stakeholder Project, Luang Prabang

The overall project has an advisory group consisting of the Head of UNESCO RACAP, a person from the Nordic World Heritage Office, and a person from the Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Norway. This group is responsible for the overall planning, contacts international experts on cultural heritage and tourism, and gives general planning advice. The overall project coordinator is located at UNESCO RACAP'S offices in Bangkok. A UNESCO culture consultant assists the stakeholder workgroup on site part time. However, it must be stated that the project coordinator had visited Luang Prabang only two to three times a year mainly due to involvement in another project.

The intention of the project was to develop test models for the preservation of heritage and the development of tourism as a local resource through stakeholder collaboration. To meet this challenge, the fundamental approach of the project was to establish channels of communication between heritage and tourism, to generate income for conservation, and to involve the local community in decisionmaking and tourism activity. If successful, such an approach could pave the way to the development of a more satisfactory and harmonious relationship between heritage conservation and tourism in Luang Prabang.

Study Methods

Primary data collection took place between June and August 2001 and utilized a survey questionnaire as well as personal interviews. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the knowledge and interest in heritage conservation and tourism development within the region and to ascertain to what extent the stakeholder project had involved the local community. The target population for the survey was residents of Luang Prabang town and province above the age of 15, who were encountered at the World Heritage Site. A local research team of four carried out an interviewer-completed survey. The area was divided into four regions, with each interviewer being assigned one area and a goal of completing 35 questionnaires over a three-day period. This gave a total of 140 completed questionnaires.

Within the sample size of 140, two types of nonprobabilistic sampling were applied. In order to ensure that community groups particularly relevant to tourism and heritage development were represented, each interviewer had to target four persons owning or working in a shop, three persons owning or working in a hotel or guesthouse, two persons owning or working in a restaurant or other catering establishment, and two persons owning or operating boats running on the Mekong river. These groups represented local community stakeholders with a common business interest in tourism. The remainder of the sample represented those who simply had contact with tourists due to geographical proximity. The two male interviewers were in addition asked to interview four Buddhist monks or abbots each. This "subject type" (Sampeiri, Collado and Lucio 1996) sample group makes up 37% of the total sample. These "typical" subjects were chosen with the intention of them being representative of the population. Second, the remaining

63% of the sample was based on convenience sampling (interviewing any Laos above the age of 15 who was met in the street).

The sample characteristics consisted of 65% male and 35% female respondents with an age range from 15 to 60+, with three-quarters 20–49 years old. Half lived in the historic center of Luang Prabang, and three-quarters of the respondents had lived there for 16 years or more. The sample had a varied professional background, 30% business owners, and 16% working in hotels or guesthouses. Interviews were undertaken, in order to gain in-depth information from a variety of professionals directly or indirectly linked to the stakeholder project, on their perceptions and experiences of the initiative. Both unstructured and semistructured interviews were used.

Sampieri et al (1996) claim that in certain studies it is necessary to acquire the opinions of experts, particularly in qualitative and exploratory studies. Therefore, the researcher decided to interview the primary stakeholders of the project in Luang Prabang as well as the project coordinator of the overall UNESCO project, and a member of the projects advisory committee. Originally, only the stakeholder workgroup was to be interviewed, but when it turned out that this group merely consisted of *one* key group, namely government officials, it was decided to reduce the numbers of interviews in the workgroup to two interviews, and include other relevant stakeholders in the tourism industry. The tour operators and the heritage sector, the *Maison du Patrimoine*, represented these.

An interview with a major hotel owner was repeatedly scheduled but failed to materialize. The two tour operators were chosen for their importance and affiliation, being the two largest in Luang Prabang (one national, the other inter-Asian). The codirector of *Maison du Patrimoine* was chosen as one of two directors who could speak English or French. The two workgroup members were selected for their central position in both the project and in tourism in Luang Prabang.

The five interviews conducted in Luang Prabang were all semistructured and took place in June and July 2001. All represent a local stakeholder group, and each interview lasted between one and two hours. In addition, two unstructured interviews were held in Bangkok and Oslo, where the subjects were chosen for their connection with the project. One informant was the overall project coordinator, the other a member of the overall project's Advisory Committee and liaison between UNESCO and the funding agencies. The questionnaire and interviews generated some quantitative data. However, both methods produced primary qualitative data that was essential in gaining an understanding of the complexities of stakeholder collaboration.

Study Findings

The survey of the local community and the indepth interviews revealed a wealth of information on the stakeholder project and the development of tourism in Luang Prabang. The findings presented here are the ones that directly relate to the objectives of the project.

Objective 1: Establishing Channels of Communication. According to the private sector (represented by the tour-operators), communication with the heritage group (represented by the Heritage House) was rare, although both their agencies were frequent users of the local cultural heritage. The Heritage House, who responded that they had no regular contact with tourism, reaffirmed this statement, but they did communicate more widely with the community in general. Nevertheless, both groups maintained that they cooperated with each other, heritage through providing conserved and accessible sites for visiting tourists, and tourism through promoting and selling visits to the cultural heritage sites and other cultural products (for example, traditional dance presentations and local crafts). Both tourism and heritage groups agreed that their work leads to enhanced economic activity and profits in the local community. However, despite this, they did not acknowledge the existence of any interdependence between them.

Despite a lack of formal channels of communication, the tour operators demonstrated understanding and expressed a wish for communication. In contrast, the heritage sector, while acknowledging that tourism may be a threat to cultural heritage, did not see it as important to communicate or collaborate with the industry. They maintained that they were open for collaboration with anyone but underlined that their main aim was to preserve the heritage of Luang Prabang and its people. This finding is consistent with previous research that identifies the difficulties inherent in managing heritage tourism (Curtis 1998; Leask and Goulding 1996).

The above attitudes reveal that the tourism sector seemed to recognize the need to improve communication possibly because the importance of well kept/managed and accessible heritage sites is obvious to it. The heritage sector, though, did not see the same need. This could be explained by the fact that tourism does not yet represent a serious threat to the cultural heritage in Luang Prabang. Moreover, the Heritage House argues that as tourism contributes limited funds towards their conservation work, they cannot depend on it as a source of funding. These results reveal that in terms of establishing channels of communication between heritage and tourism this particular objective has not yet been met.

Objective 2: Generating Income for Conservation. One of the more tangible tasks of the stakeholder project had been to establish a local revenue capture scheme whereby the revenue generated would go towards heritage conservation and upgrading services in the local community. All interviewees confirmed that there had been discussions at the local level on how this could be achieved. Several options included a bed tax, a "passport" style ticket to the attractions, and donation vouchers from US\$2 and upwards that would be promoted and sold at hotels. The latter scheme was the one finally approved. This scheme was implemented and consisted of a \$2 bed-tax that tourists were asked to pay upon checkout from the hotel or guesthouse. However, there was

no plan for how this income would be managed or used and take up of the scheme had been patchy. This has caused frustrations for all those involved.

The project coordinator and the Nordic World Heritage Office believed that a lack of political will was the real obstacle to the effective implementation of an income-generating scheme. The centralization of authority described by (Tosun 2000:618) provides an operational limitation to participation and affects the local community, including the stakeholders, who consequently lose motivation and interest while waiting for a decision to be made. This has been echoed in previous research that examined collaborative tourism planning in Peru (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002).

However, the tour operators reported that they encouraged tourists to donate funds for conservation in a more subtle way through donations at temples. The *Maison du Patrimoine* confirmed that this facilitated small restoration work. The *Maison du Patrimoine* was also considering leasing land along the Mekong River to local people to run catering outlets, under strict regulations. The leases will generate money for conservation and restore activity to the old riverbank. Therefore, it appears that the attempts by the stakeholder project to facilitate the generation of income for conservation from tourism had not been put in place. Instead a voluntary initiative from the private sector (tour operators) was introduced that generated small amounts of income for heritage conservation.

Objective 3: Involving the Local Community in Decisionmaking. The survey of 140 respondents from the local community revealed that 1/3 claimed to be involved in an organization or committee that discussed the development and future of Luang Prabang, in terms of supplying data, giving opinions on decisions, or decisionmaking. From the 140 respondents, 14 (10%) were directly involved through their representation of an organization. The survey further disclosed that nearly all (96%) of the respondents think that local people should be consulted on matters relating to the development of Luang Prabang as it directly affects their futures. The respondents felt that villagers could contribute positively to the development process through their ideas. Only 3% felt that local people should not be consulted on development issues, as they were considered to be incapable of such things and hence not qualified to know what is best for the community.

These findings indicate that the majority of the local community was motivated to participate on issues that involved the future of their town. The stakeholder project itself did not specify the level of participation that was being targeted. But applying Butler's level of stakeholder participation (1999) the levels of community participation found in Luang Prabang are mainly ones of "petition" and "advice", and the local community are what Stolton and Dudley (1999) refer to as secondary stakeholders. Only a few respondents are at the level of representation (primary stakeholders) where they actually have a say and may influence directly what is happening in the town.

The stakeholder workgroup, despite its name, effectively consisted entirely of government departments. The workgroup members affirmed that it had never discussed extending the workgroup to include other stakeholder groups. The reason given for this was that community participation and involvement was a very new concept to the government. This is in agreement with other research (Ladkin and Bertramini 2002; Timothy 1999, 1998; Tosun 2000, 1998; Tosun and Jenkins 1998; Yuksel et al. 1999) that highlights that community involvement is primarily a developed world concept that often encounters problems when translated to the developing world. It was also stated that the local tourism authority (and possibly other local government agencies) had organized three or four meetings in which selected participants (for example, Abbots, the Hotel and Guesthouse Association, the Boat Association) were invited to discuss the future development of tourism in Luang Prabang. However, the meetings were terminated without conclusion, and final decisions were made that the government decided was the most feasible.

The tour operators confirmed that the community had not participated or been involved in tourism development or heritage conservation. Moreover, they felt that the local community could not contribute because they had no knowledge of either concept. This notion has been highlighted in previous research by Timothy (1999) in a study of participatory community planning in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where local professionals did not think the community members were able to contribute to tourism decisions. To change this, the Heritage House tried to raise the community's knowledge of local heritage conservation through presentations of visual material, with the aim of communicating the importance of heritage conservation.

The above findings reveal that neither the community nor the stakeholder groups in Luang Prabang truly participated in the decisionmaking process. The level of participation must in the case of the community be called "imposition", and in the case of the other stakeholder groups, "petition" and "advice" (Butler 1999). Using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, this is the third rung, the "informing" stage. The decisionmaking process was highly centralized, and ultimately took place at a high government level.

Objective 4: Involving the Local Community in Tourism Activities. The survey revealed that three-quarters of the respondents had contact with tourism, some formally through business operations and jobs, others casually through meeting and talking to tourists on the street or at the temples. As many as two-thirds of the sample had been offered a new job or business opportunity since 1996 (the year following the World Heritage Site designation); out of these 37% had started their own business and 32% had secured a job in a hotel, guesthouse, or restaurant. These figures cannot be directly linked to the stakeholder project but should rather be seen as a result of the rapid increase in tourist arrivals to Laos and Luang Prabang. The community survey demonstrated that most of the tourism businesses and employment opportunities in Luang Prabang had come into being after the designation of

the World Heritage Site. However, no evidence exists to demonstrate whether the increase in tourism is a direct result of World Heritage Site designation *per se*.

In terms of involving the local community in business and job opportunities, the development coincided with the project's objective of involving the local community in tourism activity. Nevertheless, the in-depth interviews revealed that there were no investment incentives offered for entrepreneurs or financial support; hence this situation was not a result of the project or any other strategy. The interviews also disclosed that the project had no strategy for recruiting, educating, or training people for the tourism industry. The government felt that qualified manpower was one of tourism's main challenges for further development, a sentiment echoed by the tour operators who confirmed that a lack of knowledge and professionals in the local industry caused the most complaints from tourists. These findings were positive in the sense that the local community was actively involved in activities and directly benefiting from increased participation. However, this was largely attributed to the rise in tourism in general, rather than through any specific objectives of the stakeholder project.

Objective 5: The Extent of Stakeholder Collaboration. Using Jamal and Getz's definition,

Stakeholder collaboration is a process of joint decisionmaking among autonomous, key stakeholders of an interorganizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain (1995:188).

Using this as a benchmark when assessing the extent of stakeholder collaboration in Luang Prabang, it is evident that there has been no such collaboration, as there has been no joint decisionmaking. Furthermore, the aim of stakeholder collaboration is to build a consensus among stakeholders. For this to be possible, they all must be represented and have an equal say in discussions. This had not been the case in Luang Prabang.

However, Stolton and Dudley (1999) note that participation works differently in varying cultural and political contexts. The Western model and definition of stakeholder collaboration may not be appropriate for Luang Prabang. In line with Tosun's limitations to stakeholder participation in Turkey (Tosun 2000), the interview findings reveal a number of issues that have impeded the project. These were at a very practical level. First is the local organization of the project. The workgroup members confirmed that they held no specific meetings because of time constraints. This was largely because they all had other jobs, and no one was employed full-time on the project. Also, the recommendations of the group that had to be approved by the president of the group (who often was not at the meetings) were not considered to be final, but rather subject to ratification at a higher government level. This impeded and slowed down the decisionmaking process.

Second, problems with communication and motivation were evident. The project coordinator felt that communication between the workgroup and UNESCO RACAP could have been better. The contact person for both parties changed during the project, and members of the workgroup speaking little or no English compounded problems. There was also a gross lack of coordination among the government agencies, which made the project inefficient and reduced the will of others to be engaged. Third, the political system of Laos was not considered to be conducive to stakeholder collaboration. The authority is centralized and bureaucracy is decentralized and slow working. The government officials in Luang Prabang seldom had the authority to make decisions, and maintaining enthusiasm and interest among participants in a slow moving process is difficult. Finally, the project had suffered from limited funding. Both the project coordinator and the Nordic World Heritage Office mentioned that more could have been achieved if there had been funds for additional staff at the UNESCO RACAP office in Bangkok. With more staff on the project, they could have worked more closely with the different sites and given more onsite support to those who needed it.

In summary, the extent of stakeholder collaboration within Luang Prabang was minimal, and the UNESCO project has been unable to meet some of its key objectives that are central to the development of a symbiotic relationship between heritage and tourism. However, UNESCO projects at some of the other sites had been more successful.

CONCLUSION

This examination of the UNESCO stakeholder project in Luang Prabang raises a number of issues for discussion relevant to heritage management and tourism development through stakeholder collaboration. With regard to establishing channels of communication between the heritage and tourism groups, it is clear that in Luang Prabang, neither the public nor the private sector was accepted responsibility for beginning dialogue. Considering Laos political system, it seems appropriate that authorities at a higher level should initiate such action, and at the local level the stakeholder workgroup could assume this responsibility. The wider lesson is that although establishing communication seems a relatively simple step to take, it needs clear direction and someone responsible for driving the issue forward. Given the different agendas of the conservation bodies and the tourism industry, neither feels responsible for taking the first step. This was not necessarily unwillingness by either side but more a deficiency in the program that failed to introduce the systems through which such communications could take place. Theoretically, establishing channels of communication is perceived to be a straightforward and initial step towards stakeholder involvement. However, in reality, there are many issues to consider before this can be achieved.

The second issue relates to the generation of income for heritage conservation through tourism. Evidence from Luang Prabang shows

that the will of the local tourism industry should not be underestimated. As the project, because of what may be considered a lack of political will, failed to decide on and implement an income-generating scheme for conservation and management, local business created their own ways of generating small funds for this kind of work. This is a positive message for the heritage/tourism relationship, as there seems to be awareness of the importance of heritage resources for tourism. This is the first stage towards providing income for heritage conservation that will benefit all stakeholders. However, as has already been outlined, Luang Prabang has encountered the problem of an acceptance of the “user pays” principle (Garrod and Fyall 2000).

Reconciling the differences in opinion between the local tourism industry and the heritage managers presents a barrier towards collaboration between the two groups. Given the will of the local community to become involved in the development of heritage tourism, collaboration is likely to take place. However, its success in reconciling heritage management with tourism development is not enough. The attitudes of the heritage managers with regard to the issues concerning conservation and tourism need to be changed. All sides need to be convinced of the merits of working together to generate income for preservation.

The third issue raised by the study relates to involving the local community in decisionmaking and the notion that the right to participate does not equal the capacity to participate (Jamal and Getz 1999). This research illustrates the willingness for people to be involved, but also a lack of faith on the part of some that the community has the ability to do so. Clearly the message here is there is a need to raise stakeholder capabilities.

This is indeed a fundamental challenge in the stakeholder theory and process (Getz and Jamal 1994; Medeiros de Araujo and Bramwell 1999; Simmons 1994), as raising the capabilities will allow stakeholders to participate and negotiate in collaboration. While this does not remove power imbalances as identified by Hall (1999) and Healey (1998), raising capabilities is the first step towards community decision-making. However, the stages of “manipulation” and “therapy” in Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation should serve as a warning against involving the local community in decisionmaking at a superficial or manipulative level.

Finally, the research reveals that many of the failures of the project may not be because of fundamental flaws in the initiative itself but in its application within the specific environment, exacerbated by the wider problems of developing countries. The broader historical, political, and economic conditions exert a powerful influence on the overall tourism development process (Tosun 2000). In a country where tourism faces planning and management challenges, as well as fundamental problems of development, collaboration may seem difficult to achieve, as it is these external factors that ultimately make the concept problematic in application. Ultimately, Luang Prabang has offered an opportunity to explore the theoretical ideals for both stakeholder collaboration and managing heritage tourism. The research reveals the

inherent problems of trying to achieve a symbiosis of heritage management and tourism development using stakeholder collaboration.

Despite the project not meeting its objectives, communication between tourism and heritage has been initiated. It has made people in the community at least to some degree aware of the impacts of tourism and thus the need for planning. The idea of formally discussing development issues across different groups has been established and may raise the knowledge and understanding of each other's views and challenges, which in turn may lead to a wider collaboration and formulation of alliances in the future. This is essential if the relationship between heritage conservation and tourism is to develop in a way that is beneficial for all the stakeholders concerned. **A**

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