



EVEREST TOURISM: Forging links to sustainable mountain development. A critical discourse on politics of places and peoples

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the relationships between tourism interventions and the changes in socioeconomic power relations of stakeholders of Everest tourism. The consequences of tourism intervention have been analyzed and interpreted through dialectical phenomenology. Political ecology framework is used as an analytical model for inductive logic generation from the observations of social interactions on Everest tourism. Impacts of tourism interventions on local environment, culture, livelihood of the indigenous people and overall socioeconomic power relations of the people in this region have been interpreted and discussed with the theoretical perspectives of political economy and bio-environmental relationships. Through critical realism on political ecology it is concluded that the interventions of Everest tourism cannot assure the sustainability of the indigenous society, environment and economy of the region. The findings are interpreted in the line of rhetoric on Ecological Modernization Theory. **Keywords:** Political ecology, equitable tourism, indigenous people, sustainable mountain development

RESUMEN: El presente artículo describe las relaciones entre las intervenciones en el turismo y las relaciones de poder socioeconómico de los stakeholders del turismo del Everest. Las consecuencias de las políticas de turismo han sido analizadas por el prisma de la fenomenología dialéctica. El marco de referencia de la ecología política se usa aquí como modelo analítico, para inducir la generación lógica de observaciones sobre interacciones sociales en el turismo del Everest. Los impactos de las políticas del turismo en el ambiente local, en la cultura, y en el modo de vida, así como las relaciones de poder socioeconómico de la población autóctona de esta región, han sido interpretados y discutidos en la perspectiva de la economía política y de las relaciones bioambientales. Adoptando el realismo crítico en materia de ecología política, se concluye que las intervenciones en el turismo del Everest no permiten asegurar la sostenibilidad de la sociedad autóctona, del ambiente y de la economía de la región. Los resultados son interpretados a la luz de la Teoría de la Modernización Ecológica. **Palabras clave:** Ecología política, turismo equitativo, población nativa, desarrollo sostenible de las zonas de montaña.

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RESUMO: O presente artigo explora as relações entre as intervenções no turismo e as relações de poder socioeconômico dos stakeholders do turismo do Everest. As consequências das políticas de turismo têm sido analisadas pelo prisma da fenomenologia dialética. O quadro de referência da ecologia política é aqui usado como modelo analítico, para induzir observações lógicas sobre interações sociais no turismo do Everest. Os impactos das políticas do turismo no ambiente local, na cultura e no modo de vida, bem como as relações de poder socioeconômico da população autóctone desta região, têm sido interpretados e discutidos na perspectiva da economia política e das relações bio-ambientais. Adoptando o realismo crítico em material de ecologia política, conclui-se que as intervenções no turismo do Everest não permitem assegurar a sustentabilidade da sociedade autóctone, do ambiente e da economia da região. Os resultados são interpretados à luz da Teoria da Modernização Ecológica. **Palavras chave:** Ecologia política, turismo equitativo, população nativa, desenvolvimento sustentável das zonas de montanha.

INTRODUCTION

International tourism started in the Everest region in the 1950s. Immediately after the successful summit of Everest in 1953, the world's attention was drawn not just to the mountain, but also to the people who inhabit the valleys. Tourism expanded rapidly in the early 1970s to become the leading component of the local economy. In the 1990s Everest tourism was turned towards mass tourism (Rogers, 2007). In 2008, the Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) included about 100 settlements with 6221 local residents, mostly of the Sherpa people, with over 1892 heads of livestock. Although in many villages, traditional agriculture and animal husbandry are still the main sources of livelihood, more recently the local economy has become dependent upon tourism and tourism-related activities (climbing, portering, guiding, and lodge management), which represent increasingly important employment sources for local communities (Salerno et al., 2010). These days, it is a significant challenge to ensure that tourism in the Everest region fosters the kind of environmentally sustainable, culturally sensitive and socially equitable development which is appropriate in an indigenous geography, though it has already become a powerful vehicle for economic growth of outsiders and some Sherpas in Khumbu. The intervention of tourism has already been acknowledged for the synchronized development of infrastructures and continuous economic growth. It has had a major positive impact on local economic conditions providing tourism-related employment opportunities, development of schools, hospitals, airstrips, hydropower plant, etc., but it also brought about cultural and landscape changes, environmental problems like solid wastes and forest degradation, and significant socio-ecological changes through a complex interplay of effects on lifestyle and livelihood practices, resource governance systems, development interventions, and technological innovations (Nepal, 2002; Stevens, 2003; Ives, 2005; Dacanto & Sherpa, 2010; Salerno et al., 2010).

The pattern of social-ecological change in SNP is also shaped by a web of indirect and cross-scale effects of tourism and other driving forces, which are yet not fully understood (Dacanto & Sherpa, 2010).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The growth of international tourism and globalization has increasingly integrated mountain protected areas into the global economy. This has typically led to intensified resource use, loss of resource management options and weakened traditional institutional and social controls and feedback loops.

The result is that these fragile landscapes become more vulnerable, as mountain people lose their livelihood adaptation and risk-mitigation options (Jodha, as cited in Dacanto & Sherpa, 2010). Based on a household survey of villages in the Everest region, Rogers and Aitchison (1998) claimed that inequalities between different income groups are widening due to differences in tourism involvement and they warned “if tourism development is left to the market forces, it is probable that income and inequalities will widen”. In a broader sense, tourism development process involves values of actors (individuals, interest groups and public and private organizations) in a struggle for power.

In the tendency of many tourism researchers focus on the “practical or applied studies such as the economic dimensions of tourism or aspects of marketing, consumer research or visitor flows, little attention has been paid to wider philosophical, political and societal implications of such work. On the other hand, tourism policy studies have tended to focus on notions of prescription, efficiency and economy rather than ideals of equality and social justice” (Richter, 1989; Pearce, as cited in Hall, 1994). Hall (1994) asserts that the politics of place is all but ignored in tourism research. In that sense there is still a knowledge gap in terms of the politics of tourism destinations and power relations of stakeholders engaged in it. Based on the discussions above, the following research questions are set to explore the politics and power struggles of stakeholders engaged in Everest tourism: (a) “What are the changes in natural environment of the Everest region after the interventions of tourism? And, what are the consequences of such changes?”; (b) “What are the dynamics of interest of different stakeholders regarding intervention of Everest tourism?”; (c) “Do people from low income groups have the access and opportunities to tourism entrepreneurship? What is their status and Why?”.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Political ecology raises difficult and necessary questions about politics, ethics, and social justice in relation to human activity and environmental change (Lipietz, as cited in Jarosz, 2004). By taking political questions seriously, political ecology also rejects facile assumptions about environmental change and human welfare, that ecological degradation, for instance, is a universal evil affecting rich and poor alike.

Rather, it explores how such change is incorporated into concrete political and economic relationships, and the ways that it may then be used to reinforce or challenge those relationships. It exposes the inequities of such relationships precisely to suggest ways in which sustainable and equitable development may then take place (Bryant, 1991). Bryant (1991) informed that, unlike the sustainable development literature, political ecology focuses on the interplay of diverse sociopolitical forces, and the relationship of those forces to environmental change. In a world of increased political and economic interdependence, key areas in political ecology researches signal the growing social and ecological influence of national and transnational forces. Bryant further emphasized that political ecology is indeed premised on the assumption that radical social change is an essential prerequisite for just sustainable development.

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW OF THE CASE - EVEREST TOURISM

According to Blaikie and Muldavin (2004), much of the environmental policy process in the Himalayan-Hindu Kush (HKH) region occurs at interfaces between international agendas promoted by various actors and national governments. These interfaces are frontiers of negotiation, skirmishing, and compromise, becoming a confused space for different development fashions (e.g., economic approaches to the environment, community natural resource management, democratization of policy making, the livelihoods approach or a retrenched and militarized “fortress conservation”). These fashions engage with a range of national policies, politics, administrative capacities and local institutions. The accelerated and largely uncontrolled development of tourism in Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) has resulted in a discrepancy between the accumulation of solid and human waste and disposal and waste water treatment infrastructure, facilities, and capacity for their management. It is widely recognized that these factors are important causes not only of environmental degradation but also of hazardous hygienic conditions, which can lead to outbreak of disease that substantially affect the wellbeing of both local inhabitants and visitors (Hamer, as cited in Manfredi et. al, 2010). The park was gazetted in 1976 in response to conservation concerns. The first Park Management Plan (Garratt, as cited in Dacanto & Sherpa, 2010) allowed local people to continue to live in the park but strengthened state control over local resources at the expense of traditional resource management and largely centralized tourism revenues.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research is based on the research paradigm of critical realism (CR). Critical realism in its contemporary usage emerged out of de-

bates in the philosophy of science in the 1970s (e.g., Harré & Madden 1975; Bhaskar, as cited in Morgan, 2007). Works on critical realism are aimed to be linked to the theoretical basis for the struggle of the working class to attain a higher form of human society – socialism, Marxism or the scientific socialism.

To address the concerns of the social dialectics within critical realism, I made use of dialectical phenomenology (DP) as the strategy of my research. Berger and Luckmann (as cited in McNall, 1979) acknowledged the social dialectic, which is the essence of man's self-production, as identified by Karl Marx in his early writings. Marx's method is dialectical: "As society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him" (Marx, as cited in McNall, 1979). The modes of dialectic are related to phenomenology; they include parts and wholes, presence and absence, and what Sokolowski (as cited in Budd, Hill & Shannon, 2008) refers to as "identity in manifolds". Phenomenological approach has been analyzed from three different grounds in the philosophy of social research: dialectical phenomenology; transcendental phenomenology and subjective and objective phenomenology.

Phenomenology means to finally grasp the absolute, logical, ontological and metaphysical spirit but it occurs behind phenomena which are called dialectical phenomenology (Uddin & Hamiduzzaman, 2009). In this work the reflections from the observations are analyzed with established perspectives and worldviews contributing to the rhetoric of *Ecological Modernization Theory* (EMT). The Interpretation is based on the contemporarily debated discourses aided with the worldviews of the researcher standing in a critical paradigm for this undertaking. Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Groenewald, 2004) define a research paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action", dealing with first principles, 'ultimates' or the researcher's worldviews. The rhetoric of this work is based on EMT. It focuses on (existing and programmed) environmental reforms in social practices, institutional designs and societal and policy discourses to safeguard societies' sustenance bases. Interestingly, some of the common roots and perspectives between EMT and eco-Marxism with respect to social inequalities and ecological restructuring also are explored.

EMT may ultimately not only contribute to environmental social science and policy, but also strengthen linkages between those transdisciplinary pursuits and mainstream social science (Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000).

Why a Realist Political Ecology?

The aim of critical realist research on environmental degradation is to highlight how scientific explanations of environmental change provide only partial insights into complex biophysical processes, and

that existing models of explanation reflect the agendas of the societies that created them. Avoiding environmental problems might also require identifying biophysical prospects of resources that may exist uniformly across space. An alternative body of work seeks to integrate political awareness of environmental conflicts with a realist understanding of environmental change. The key aspect of this type of work is that it incorporates the construction of biophysical science into the political analysis of environment. It may therefore be argued that the political analysis of environmental degradation does not simply concern identifying winners and losers of struggles involving existing definitions of degradation, but instead the political struggle in environmental discourse to establish the truth conditions for identifying biophysical processes as degrading (Forsyth, 2001).

SAMPLING

Case study unit is Khumbu. Local stakeholders (including porters and farmers) within the research setting were selected for inquiry on their lived experience. Four different clusters in the trekking trails Viz. Pangboche, Phortse, Khumjung and Namche were selected for purposive study. The data for the analysis was developed through the study of perceptions of participants and researchers lived experience on the phenomena.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND TECHNIQUES

Field observations and social interactions on agents, structures, institutions and social process were carried out through interviews and group discussions in different stages, like: (a) information gathering – prior to field visit, in field - local informants, (b) selection of clusters, (c) socioeconomic stratification of the social classes, (d) selection of individuals and groups for interview and discussion on thematic issues.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Scope of representation is Khumbu as Everest region. Scope of stakeholders covers the local people as micro level, tourism sector - state machineries, tourism agencies, development agencies as macro level. The study is limited to the equity considerations among the micro level stakeholders of Khumbu area. It is focused to power relations among classes and clusters of Khumbu area (in terms of local stakeholders) then it has generalized the relationships to macro level stakeholders.

RESULTS

Positive changes over the time and their consequences are listed in Figure 1.

- 1 Over the time - lifestyles, clothing, language, communication, international networks, social and political networks and business relations were improved.
- 2 Infrastructural development changes were noticed (schools and hospitals, airstrips, hydropower companies, clinics, water supply systems).
- 3 Income potentials of hotels and lodge owners were increased (discussing the local level scenario, hotels and lodges relatively make more income than others).
- 4 Tea houses were improved to Lodges, Lodge and hotel owners at Khumbu were able to extended their travel agencies and hotels in Kathmandu.
- 5 Houses and resting places were improved.

Figure 1. Positive changes over the time and consequences

Negative changes and their consequences are listed in major thematic areas: (a) environmental changes, (b) conflict of interest scenario, (c) dynamics of interests among different stakeholders, (d) socioeconomic power relations of stakeholders, (e) access and opportunities of low income groups, (f) socio-cultural changes and the consequences.

Environmental changes

Figure 2 shows negative changes and their consequences in the thematic area “Environmental changes”.

- 1 Quantum of garbage increasing (*non disposable garbage increasing*).
- 2 Environmental hazards increasing, pollution not limited to solid waste, symptoms of water and air pollution were also noticed by the local people and visitors.
Solid waste problems increasing due to increased crowd of tourists, and increasing number of hotels, lodges, and market interventions. SW Becoming more visible and reducing the attraction of the visiting sites.
- 3 Consciousness towards nature, responsiveness towards the environment –in decreasing pattern. There are behavioral and attitudinal shifts (Wastes found haphazardly thrown to the streams showing potential problems of water pollution, wastes found outside of the rubbish pits and baskets, showing the lack of responsible behaviors and attitudes on both sides -visitors and local peoples).
- 4 Kinship towards culture and nature is in degrading pattern.
- 5 Environment management (garbage management) is becoming the challenge for SPCC; other actors’ participation (direct /indirect) is low.
Financial and human resources scarcity in management of wastes supports to SPCC is temporary, no strong provision of recycling funds and allocating budget for environment management.
- 6 Pollution problems becoming more visible and repulsive to amenity users.
- 7 Land cover changes due to increased flow of tourists and seasonal stress of tourism activities.
- 9

Figure 2. Environmental changes and the consequences

Conflict of interest scenario

“The hidden reality is about the self-identity of the indigenous groups and recognition of the local practices. From the very beginning the lack of evaluation of local practices leads to this conflict. Now the nature of conflict turned towards a more political nature. It may raise the issues of the rights and identity of the indigenous groups in future. The conflicting interfaces between the central and local governance mechanism give rise to instability in the social harmony of the people over there”.

“There are ongoing debates on our rights raised by the revolutionary political cadres. But, we (porters) are sandwiched between the conflicting interests of the political actors and employers.”

Dynamics of interests among different stakeholders

Figure 3 shows negative changes and their consequences in the thematic area “Dynamics of interest among different stakeholders”.

Gaps in local needs vs. external interests; local demands suppressed; influence of external agents is high.

Competing interests create conflict among villagers. Among different social classes (less attention to common development goals, due to past disputes and competition for economic growth from tourism).

Farmers vs. conservation interests, struggles, conflicting interests (conflicts concentrated around the debates – “Who loses for whom? Who benefits out of it?”).

Lack of awareness about the development initiatives, their objectives and interests and goals of the development initiatives; hence conflict of interests among local people and development initiative.

Lack of transparency in resources distribution; lack of consensus in planning and decision making process creates loss of development interests in low income groups.

Equity conflicts are concentrated around the issues of access to natural resources and distribution of benefits from tourism.

Growing dynamism - social equity conflicts and conflict of interests in religious / cultural dimensions are turning towards intergenerational conflicts.

Major interests of porters - equity in distribution respect for labor value, humanly treatment, affiliation and recognition in social process (conflict dynamics: Suppressed and exploited by other stakeholders’ interests, Lack of consensus due to competing conflict of interest for economic growth).

Major interests of farmers - equity in distribution, basic resources requirement (conflict scenario: potential disputes and conflicts among villagers and development agents from the urban center).

High income groups’ interest - investment and growth.

Low income groups interests - employment opportunities to sustain daily life.

Indigenous institutions’ interest - space for participation in indigenous geography and nature management, space for inclusion in planning and decision making process.

(Continued)

(cont.)

Exclusion of people with low socioeconomic status in development planning and interventions; problems are created from interests of power and politics.

Unmatched interest of conservation administration and indigenous people's participation.

Local efforts for tourism management are not supported and recognized.

Lack of proper recycling of fund and resources to the local NGOs like SPCC for environment management.

Challenges and responsibilities of environment management confined to Local NGOs only.

Controlling of the capital by centralized tourism agencies (scenario of conflict of interest between local entrepreneurs and agencies in urban centers- local entrepreneurship is dependent on the exchange of goods and services they have ...which are also exported from the urban centers).

Conservationists' interests dominated interests of indigenous Buddhist institutions and traditional Sherpa clusters' natural resources management institutions

Marketeer's interest - competitive scenario to penetrate the emerging market towns and to establish their goods and services (e.g., Chinese and other foreign brands), not sensitive towards the environment.

Politician's interest - to limit devolution of power and delegation of authorities to local governing institutions and processes.

Figure 3. Dynamics of interests among different stakeholders

Socioeconomic power relations of stakeholders

Figure 4 shows negative changes and their consequences in the thematic area "Socioeconomic power relations of stakeholders".

Significant increase of the hotels, lodge owners' socioeconomic potentials but not that of local farmers and porters from other areas.

Porters - lack of affiliation, recognition and social respects, lack of labor value, not treated as social agents, lack of social network, lack of hearing by social and political institutions, alternate livelihood strategies and options are not identified ; underpayment and unnecessary exploitation by employers and companies, no standardized rates for labor services; occupational and livelihood insecurity prevails; vulnerable situation of occupational health and safety; lack of compassion towards their efforts and lack of humanly treatment (more serious in past).

Farmers - scarcity of basic resources: e.g., firewood, lack of social network, political and other organizational networks; alternate livelihood strategies and options are not identified.

Porter's and farmers' socioeconomic status not improved over the time, further suppressed and exploited by other stakeholders' interests.

Class disparities and gaps increasing; class conflicts increasing; class struggles are more visible. Over the time – no significant changes in socioeconomic status of farmers certain clusters (Pangboche). No changes in power equations.

(Continued)

(cont.)

Due to the lack of empowerment, lack of capability of producing standard local commodities and inequitable distribution of the benefits, low income, groups are not able to benefit more.

Less local capability for commoditization created dependency of local economy on foreign economy (local commodities are less competitive over foreign goods and services, exported and branded products dominated local produce); the scenario of chain of dependency and chain of dissatisfaction is in order of local stakeholders to state then foreign agencies.

Figure 4. Socioeconomic power relations of stakeholders

Access and opportunities of low income groups

Figure 5 shows negative changes and their consequences in the thematic area “Access and opportunities of low income groups”.

Low income groups- less access to and benefit sharing from tourism development activities and natural resources use.

Commoditization potential – no significant increase; significant increase of the hotels, lodge owners socioeconomic potentials but not that of farmers.

No Investment potential of porters and farmers.

No improvement to the services to the porters.

Increased costs of raw materials and prices of finished goods, difficulties to fulfill daily requirements.

Transportation cost higher for remote clusters (Pangboche and Phortse) within the region (people at Pangboche and Phortse have to spend more time to carry goods from Namche and they also have to pay more cost for transportations as compared to the ones at Namche and Khumjung).

Extraction of benefits by high income groups within clusters and then by hotels and agencies in urban centers.

Figure 5. Access and opportunities of low income groups

Socio-cultural changes and the consequences

Figure 6 shows negative changes and their consequences in the thematic area “Socio-cultural changes and the consequences”.

Less conscious for protection of cultural institutions e.g. Gumba, dependency increased for repair and maintenance (case of Pangboche Gumba).

Changes in kin-centric institutions.

Competitive changes due to tourism market brought changes in social harmony.

Young people’s engagement in cultural and ritual practices, farming practices-less.

(Continued)

(cont.)

Young people -Leaving for foreign opportunities, Family composition changing – older ones in home.
 Farming population, farm land and farming practices are in decreasing pattern.
 Productivity decreasing, socioeconomic profile of farmers not improving.
 Farm land, farming groups and farming activities reduced as compared to the past.

Figure 6. Socio-cultural changes and the consequences

The resonating issues on the daily problems of Pangboche farmers are the result of conjugation of the unmet needs with the unmatched interest of the conservation in one side and the commercialization of tourism on another. Likewise the situation of problems of porters is also associated with the competing interests of various tourism stakeholders.

The Situation provides the background for the antithesis which can be subjected to the cause and effect. Here within the causal relation the causes and effects are standing as their antithesis to one another. On the background of the antithesis, besides the cases of farmers and porters, the situation of the infrastructural and socioeconomic development and the existing situation of the poor access and benefit sharing by the low income groups which are characterized by family composition with no children attending school, having no money for medication, with nothing to afford for accessing the benefits from their raw commodities in the commercialized tourism market are considered in the background.

Overall, the background of the antithesis was analyzed by the comparative issues between some clusters within the region, contrasting issues of the individuals and the dialectical responses of the consequences of the development interventions over there. I have presented the final notes to develop links to the theoretical perspectives and discourses so as to express the dialectical phenomena behind the tourism development in the Everest region. The background of the observation provides the basis for the antithesis. This antithesis pattern provides the ground for the dialectical phenomenology on the development interventions and its consequences in the area of my study. Relying on the basis of what I observed within three weeks of peak season of tourism in the Everest region, I have developed the thesis on political ecology of Everest tourism: forging *links to sustainable mountain development*.

INTERPRETATION

In terms of indigenous land management techniques, interactions resulting from kin-centric ecology enhance and preserve the ecosys-

tems with which indigenous people have lived for centuries. Indigenous land management systems reflect the kin-centric relationship that indigenous cultures maintain with their natural resources (Salmon, 2000). The degrading pattern discussed above may be the result of the loss of kin-centric ecology of the indigenous people's along with the invasion of tourism. The major factor of more intense degradation of the environment in Khumbu is tourism and the hordes of overseas tourists and trekkers (Karan & Mather, 1985). This indicates that the tourism impact on the Khumbu environment is particular and more localized. Some disappointments from the previous researches and observations on the degraded situation of Khumbu entail, for instance, that the overcrowding, pollution problem, land degradation, cultural stress, geographical stress would definitely affect the decision of the visitors to return to the Everest region in the future. The situation of seasonal stress in geography, natural environment, culture, and social activities leads Khumbu region towards social and environmental fragility.

Based on the perspectives of 'The changing human nature relationship (HNR) in the context of global environmental challenges', individuals, ethnic groups, and cultural systems construct their own concepts of nature on which they rely and to which they relate.

Stakeholders shape the respective human nature relationships (Glaser, 2001). In the case of Khumbu, local people happened to lose their self-determination as western styles of nature conservation practices has already dominated their indigenous practices.

Due to the lack of proper institutions and initiatives for physical planning and housing activities, trail repair and maintenance, management of pollution problems, etc., the natural landscape of Khumbu is being degraded continuously.

According to Glaser, environmental sustainability (as a prerequisite for social stability) means that natural capital must be maintained. Human welfare is to be improved by protecting raw material sources and by ensuring proper sinks for human wastes. Based on these perspectives the situation of Khumbu cannot assure for the environmental sustainability of the entire region. Social groups or social units and their subsystems are constituted by the notion of self-identity and, complementarily, by a sharp outline defining other, competing social units. These groups undergo a constant process of reorganization, that is, transformation or social change. Social groups need a spatial environment as a constituting frame. Social space defines the situation of social action; it determines symbols and language. Social metabolism refers to the activities and interactions of social groups: they produce, they consume, and they reproduce themselves, under a regulatory framework of legal and ethical principles.

According to Serbser (as cited in Glaeser, 2001) different components of social metabolism work in combination and as an interacting set, hence determining the survivability and sustainability of a society. The cultural and social situation of Khumbu presented above can be interpreted as the degrading trend of societal and cultural continuity. The perceptions of indigenous people can be interpreted within the bio-centric worldview. It is a more or less consistent set of beliefs, assumptions, biases or ideologies that place the biosphere at the center of a person's way of life, thought and feeling. It represents a partnership model between humans and Nature, one of its main tenets being the belief that the human is a member of the web of life rather than its master or even its steward (Marshall, as cited in Verhagen, 2008).

According to Fisher (1990), the younger generation lacks interest in traditional and cultural practices and Sherpa children outside Khumbu are unfamiliar with many Sherpa social, cultural, and religious traditions. In this sense, there remains doubt on societal and cultural continuity in coming generations. The kin-centric cultural attitude of Sherpa peoples is found to be the most significant social quantum for their societal continuity. It is also impacted to a large extent and the changes in new generations (e.g., occupation, language, dresses) are not supporting to uphold the originality of the social spirit of the Sherpa people. Based on the perspectives of Kin-centric Ecology: indigenous perceptions of the human nature relationship (Salmon, 2000), the violation on the perceptions may lead to ecological crisis which ultimately corrodes the values and norms of the indigenous peoples. As a consequence, it hampers the cultural and societal continuity.

According to Hufty (2010), protected areas all over the world were conceived along the 'Yellowstone' Model. In the name of the common good, personified by the colonial state, African, Asian or Latin American landscapes were enclosed and natives excluded by force while the parks were opened to a leisured class tourism. Parks were also used as tools of modernization and social control, a logic reinforced by the postcolonial regimes, up to now.

For Hufty (2010), in Nepal, conversations started by top-down policy, to serve the interest of King and elites in the early seventies. In the different development discourses, the controlled policy changed now to a right-based approach through participatory approaches. Initially, a single stakeholder started the conversation in the name of state, now a pluralistic ownership is said to be established. Different acts, regulations and institutions have emerged in this course to improve the participation and decision making of the system on behalf of the people, mostly women, poor and marginalized. But the existing scenario can be interpreted as practices of women participation without inclusion, eco-friendly discourses...but not defined whether on economy or ecosystem.

There is in every social formation a particular branch of production which determines the position and importance of all the others and the relations obtained in this branch accordingly determine the relations of all other branches as well (Marx, 1857). As commodities determine socioeconomic relationships (Marx & Engels, 1859), it is really difficult to establish socioeconomic power relationships for those who cannot hold the significant position in tourism commodity chain. Those who lack standard and competing sets of tourism commodities cannot benefit it in long term.

Tourism is a global commodity chain. Harrison (as cited in Clancy, 2009) points out that tourism has been a global activity for centuries, and the packaging of tourism products as commodities has been around since at least the mid-19th century. In this regard, while dealing with tourism services and products the local commodities have to establish their socioeconomic space within the GCC of tourism. But the situation of undervalued local products suggest for the dependency on the exported goods and services.

Dependent economic development of a state in terms of the external influences on national policies (Sunkel, 1969) and the historical condition of dependency (Santos, 1971) lead towards the loss of self-determination of the dominated and dependent states and social clusters.

Global tourism expansion, uneven development and, in some cases, retraction, play themselves out at the sub-national levels of regions and communities. Urban communities and rural settlements are all influenced by tourism to some degree and also play important roles in shaping the structure and nature of the industry.

The socioeconomic situation reflects that the low income groups are suppressed through the tourism interventions. The short term benefits of tourism that they grab cannot serve their life in long term. The dependency of the economic development in terms of the external influences on national development policies is leading towards the continuation of the power relationships. It is also true for the peoples in Khumbu region. The situation of tourism being dominated by the free markets, consequences of socioeconomic disparities and equity conflicts are the major challenges for the economic (Goodland, 1995) and social sustainability (Glaeser, 2001) of Everest tourism.

In an analysis, Mountain Agenda (1999) shows that the total revenue generated 49 percent to Europe, 27 percent to North and South America, and 19 percent to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific island states. Other regions share an additional 5 percent.

International Tourism receipts for the year 2005, recorded by UN-WTO (2006) show that, it accounts US\$ 140,765 million for Asia Pacific region. Within Asia Pacific region, South Asia is the least in the rank with US\$ 9,816 million, while North East Asia is at the top (US\$

70,820 million, about 50 percent of the entire region). South Asia had only 7 percent of market share of Asia Pacific in 2005. In the same year, India had 5.2 percent and Nepal had 0.1 percent market share. China (in North East Asia) had 20.8 percent of market share of the Asia Pacific region in 2005. This clearly shows that international tourism is webbed with the uneven economic distribution and economic dependency.

Mountain tourism must therefore be embedded in an overall concept of sustainable mountain development, with a view to diversify mountain economies in order to prevent one-sided dependency on tourism, reduce leakage of revenues, and increase local and regional multiplier effects - as well as environmental and societal benefits (Mountain Agenda, 1999).

Tourism interventions though create short term benefits for the poor people, the disparities between the rich and poor increases with time along with the unregulated growth of tourism in the Everest region. High income groups (e.g., hoteliers and lodge owners) invest their income to promote their entrepreneurship such that their income levels rise annually, but the low income groups (farmers and porters) cannot cope with the competitive commercial market, no further investment and hence their income potential decreases with time. Due to lack of standard sets of commodities (Marx & Engels, 1859), to establish the significant socioeconomic relations in the tourism market, the low income groups remain poorer for long term.

The livelihood of the farm land and forest dependent peoples is negatively influenced by the restriction of the access to resources by conservation practices, lack of subsistence production and higher market prices due to tourism. These groups are frustratingly being exploited by the agencies and hence they cannot sustain longer to build up good entrepreneurship in Everest tourism. When a Third World country uses tourism as a development strategy, it becomes enmeshed in a global system over which it has little control. The superior entrepreneurial skills, resources, and commercial power of metropolitan companies enable them to dominate many Third World tourist destinations (Britton, 2002).

Some literature on tourism portrays the industry as a neocolonial form of economic exploitation dominated by TNCs that create relations of dependency and distort the local economies they come into contact with (Milne 1997; Britton 1991; Pearce, 1989; Hills & Lundgren, as cited in Carty, 2009).

Modern international tourism is rooted in the dynamics of colonialism and dependency. This tourism was also primarily extractive and depleted natural resources such as skins, ivory and fauna, in order to sustain the wealthy (Williams, 2002).

With all these interpretations and arguments it is consistent to conclude, considering the analysis of Britton (2002) which has suggested that developing countries cannot benefit from tourism in long term, that the international tourism industry is already a product of metropolitan capitalist enterprise.

DISCUSSION

Tourism growth in such a fashion creates a dependent situation not only at local level but also at the regional and state level. Here, dependence means *a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected* (Hall, 1994). In such a situation of dependency the transitioning economies cannot assure for the sustainable development and management of their natural resources. "Tourism may add to the number of jobs available and it may increase the trappings of modernity with modern building and new services, but if it does not contribute to the development of the local resources, then it differs little from the traditional agricultural plantation" (Matthews, as cited in Hall, 1994). It implies that building local capacities is necessary to conserve and manage to sustain the environment of such geography. Consistent with this, Sagar & VanDeveer (2005) have discussed the issues of capacity development in environment (CDE) programs. They have clearly suggested that the developing countries require building capacity in these countries, and not in their industrialized counterparts. To address the political questions on development and environmental challenges, Bryant (1991) recommends putting politics first in the discourses of sustainability. Therefore there are possibilities, and at the same time needs, to create links between the perspectives on political ecology of development interventions (like tourism in mountain regions) and the current discourses of sustainable mountain development.

Figure 7 shows the findings from the analysis through critical realism on political ecology of Everest tourism.

Due to the lack of policy priorities in favor of indigenous geography and the institutional failure in tourism management, the intervention of Everest tourism is turning towards unsustainable growth. Lack of equity and justice in the distribution of benefits from such intervention leads to equity conflicts and such equity conflicts lead to intergenerational social conflicts and hence the spirit of sustainability gets violated.

1. The situation of seasonal stress in natural environment, culture, and social activities leads Khumbu region towards the social and environmental fragility.
2. The situation cannot assure the continuity of the cultural and societal trends in new generation of Sherpa in Khumbu.
3. Due to the lack of proper institutions and initiatives for physical planning and housing activities, trail repair and maintenance, management of pollution problems; the natural landscape of Khumbu is being degraded continuously.
4. Low income groups are further marginalized through the tourism interventions.
5. Poor people getting poorer.
6. Complex and continuous conflict of interest on Everest tourism.
7. Livelihood of Farmers and Porters at risk.

Figure 7. Findings

This research is an outcome of critical discussion on the current rhetoric of Ecological Modernization Theory. It has brought out a critical debate in the line of critical social theorists along with the evidences found and experienced during the research visit in the Everest region. The interpretations, discussions, findings and recommendations are based on the paradigm of critical realism on the social and natural phenomena.

While talking about the sustainability of the local economy, capability enhancement for the exploitation and value addition on the local commodities is the primary concern. The farm and forest dependent people should be considered within the broad discussion of the conservation of nature. This should be based on the boarder views of bio-environment interactions and human nature relationships, addressing the livelihood concerns of the farm and forest dependent clusters of the indigenous geography.

The position and participation of the agents at local level particularly the working class people in tourism should be discussed along the line of the consideration of their issues. The structures and agents in the development process should be linked and discussed with the emerging discourses of the ecological modernization in the verse of the global environmental challenges. Increased inequalities, widening gaps and severe poverty problems and diminishing resources in this century warn for the need of alternative modes of social production and reformation of international political economy.

The same applies for international tourism. Though the system may produce huge benefits, may make poor people rich, the system itself will become a cause of its failure and, it is due to the inequalities in the

distribution mechanism in one side and overexploitation of the natural environment and labor forces on the other. The debates are centralized around the equity concerns in contemporary wisdom for development. The discourses of these days are coming around issues of equity in respect of gender, class, clusters, societies, and generations. The conception of sustainable development gives rise to the issues of intergenerational equity. Intergenerational equity considerations are aligned with the stability of social metabolism and social equity processes, and are directed towards social justice. They form the basis for the sustainability of the development interventions.

In this understanding it is summarized that to assure sustainable development of mountain region tourism development policies and their interventions should focus on the ecological and social concerns of the mountain's geography.

Based on the findings on critical realism of 'political ecology of Everest tourism' this research has recommended the following aspects for further policy research and development process: (a) policy priorities for such special geography, (b) society and culture should be based on the epistemology of social justice, (c) the context of revival of local institutions for environmental capacity building at local level and resilience of the local regions can be researched under the institutional arrangement for policy implementation, (d) participatory modeling of sustainable tourism interventions in the Everest region under ecological and social aspects can be the useful step to inform the development policies with win-win proposition, (e) sustainable tourism development models should be guided with the religious, cultural, natural and social dimensions so as to encourage morality of profit from Everest tourism through social equity ventures, (f) the institutional rights and resources sharing strategies are to be reformulated by intervening conservation and development proposals based on bottom-up approaches in operational level, (g) the livelihood concerns and social needs of the low income groups (porters and farmers) should be incorporated to make development plans pro-poor and equitable.

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Submitted: 18th October 2010 Accepted: 26th April 2011
Final version: 24th January 2011 Refereed anonymously

