

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia*

Ed. by Claudia Dolezal, Alexander Trupp, and Houg T. Bui,  
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Tourism in Southeast Asia is diverse, with a long history, and it significantly contributes to livelihoods in the region. However, as previous studies have clarified, excessive tourism development in the region has created various negative social effects in the local communities. Therefore, previous tourism studies concerning Southeast Asia have focused on the relationship between the host society and international guests. These visitors include western tourists, whose activities have influenced economic development and the rise of foreign exchange through the regional tourism market as well as the formation of regional livelihoods. However, as classical discussions on the anthropology of tourism indicate, tourism development has also led to economic disparity and the radical transformation of local cultures. In this sense, researchers have focused on the negative effects of tourism on the concept of development from the perspectives of the modernization paradigm and dependency theory and thereby have encouraged the modification of the concept. In this academic context, studies on tourism in Southeast Asia have long involved the concept of “development” as it relates to tourism practices; moreover, they have also produced pioneering works to modify the concept of tourism development.

Hence, *Tourism and Development in Southeast Asia* reveals that the social context of “tourism development” in the region has dramatically changed in accordance with interactions and debates in the international and local arenas. As the concept of sustainability and standards for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become widespread in the tourism field, the concept of development has also been connected to regional perspectives. As such, this has enhanced participation and empowered local communities to examine new forms of community livelihoods in the region through the analysis of sustainable tourism practices such as ecotourism, community-based tourism, and sustainable tourism. Specifically, the concept of tourism development should be reconsidered in tourism studies.

In this academic context, this book illustrates the transformation of the concept of tourism development and tourism-based livelihoods in the region through accumulating ethnographical works on the region. Various international and indigenous researchers of tourism studies analyze

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the transformation of tourism development in the region, which promotes sustainable community development and livelihood through tourism practices.

The book has three parts consisting of a total of fourteen chapters; notably, it presents the diversity of tourism development in Southeast Asian countries from the perspective of ethnographic methods. Chapter 1 highlights the historical development and current situation of tourism studies in Southeast Asian countries by considering the relationship between tourism and development. As the authors outline the tourism studies in Southeast Asian countries, they clarify that previous works were more focused on tourism development in Southeast Asia in relation to western tourists, which has promoted unequal power relations. In contrast, they emphasize that this book focuses on the awareness of the local challenges and best-practice examples where tourism can be regarded as making a positive difference to the residents' lives.

Chapter 2 presents an outline of the tourism-development nexus; specifically, it shows how tourism has been embracing development paradigms in the region. As tourism development represented modernization and dependency, the region pursued tourism, boosting economies and progress. The chapter clarifies that this development paradigm is still dominant despite the growing importance of an alternative more and sustainable approach.

Chapter 3 is an examination of the significance of ethnographic methods in Southeast Asian tourism studies; notably, this is done by focusing on the insider-outsider debate, power relations, access to the field, and language. The author summarizes through describing ethnographic works that Southeast Asia is a highly complex region in terms of cultural variances, ethnic minorities, and indigenous populations; moreover, one cannot make prior assumptions about how fieldwork relationships are going to work out.

Chapter 4 consists of a description of the development of pilot projects for Payments for Forest Environmental Services (PEFS) in Vietnamese ecotourism. Although Vietnamese ecotourism is aimed at maximizing economic benefits driven by large-scale tourism at the expense of environmental and social sustainability, the authors insist that the development of ecotourism in national parks in Vietnam requires radical changes to its management structure. Furthermore, the awareness of ecotourism as a tool for biodiversity protection should be promoted as a replacement for the conventional and current view of ecotourism as an economic tool.

Chapter 5 investigates sustainable tourism in Malaysia via a case study of stewardship in Malaysia's Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark archipelago. As sustainable tourism and SDGs are more focused on tourism activities in Malaysia, the activities of the Geopark and stewardship of its rangers have become some of the core elements of the management of ecotourism in the country.

Chapter 6 is a description of Save Our Small Islands (SOSIS), a collaborative conservation program that addresses environmental, conservation, and tourism issues in the Kepulauan Seribu Regency of Jakarta in Indonesia. Through this program, communities are beginning to play a vital role in achieving sustainable tourism.

Chapter 7 is an examination via statistical analysis of the economic impact of ecotourism on the poor in Laos. Although non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as governments, have encouraged the empowerment of economic distribution, the result of the study shows that inequality in the distributional effects of tourism income still prevails, both in cases of publicly and privately run ecotourism ventures.

Chapter 8 describes the migratory movements of Thailand's predominantly female Akha ethnic minority vendors into urban tourism micro-entrepreneurships. The development of micro-entrepreneurships in urban tourism have become essential activities for ethnic minority livelihoods in the country.

In Chapter 9, the authors describe the transformation of the livelihoods of traditional

fishermen in the Labuan Bajo region of Indonesia. These fishermen participate in the tour boat business, which has become a new livelihood in the community. The authors conclude that the development of tourism-based activities has given them a sustainable livelihood, but also includes negative social effects in their daily lives.

Chapter 10 describes the development of cultural landscapes in Ifugao province in the Philippines. The author indicates that the rice terraces in Ifugao, widely known as popular cultural landscapes in the region, are a result of social interactions among the local community and global agents like UNESCO, the Philippines' government, and international tourists.

In Chapter 11, the author outlines the development of tourism policy in Myanmar through analyzing its tourism development. The author concludes that a lack of transparency in the planning and development of new destinations may soon cause conflict within and between communities, local authorities, and investors, thus making Myanmar less attractive for future investment.

Chapter 12 describes tourism development and destination governance in Cambodia through analyzing Cambodia's Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) development plan and its destinations. The authors conclude that community and local participation are the key factors for its development, which will establish and improve livelihoods within the community.

Chapter 13 is concerned with the potential of agritourism in Thailand with regard to sustainable community development. Notably, agritourism has become an effective tool for sustainable community development in economic development policy (Thailand 4.0); as such, this tourism activity promotes creative ways that can be harnessed collectively as "creative agritourism" that has the potential to effect these changes.

Chapter 14 is essentially a summary of all the chapters and presents the current issues and future prospects of tourism in Southeast Asia.

This book is significant as all its chapters clarify the variety of development concepts in the tourism field from the perspectives of local practices through their ethnographic works. Although previous studies in tourism development tend to describe the concept of development from a Western perspective, the contributors to this book show the various social contexts of tourism development and the variety of new forms of livelihood in the region as the result of this development. In fact, this is accomplished from the perspective of local communities. Moreover, these new forms of development and livelihoods are also connected with the concept of sustainability at the global level, which contributes to the conservation of natural resources and local communities. Thus, the essential contribution of this book is to recognize new forms of tourism development from local community perspectives in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, the book's chapters describe the concept of tourism development beyond the host-guest dichotomy in the field. As many chapters concentrate on the interactions and collaborations among tourism stakeholders inside and outside the region, contemporary tourism practices in the region do not describe a hierarchy in the relationship between international tourists and host tourism destinations. Rather, it is social participation and interactions among tourism stakeholders that have significantly contributed to co-creating community livelihoods as well as tourism activities in the field.

Although the concept of this book focuses more on recent discussions of tourism development from local community perspectives, the reviewer feels that these are still influenced by Western concepts and evaluations. Given this, the authors concentrate on the link between the international tourism market and western tourists. However, tourism practices in Southeast Asia are considered a vernacular way of travel, and tourism mobility in the region is still alive; thereby, the regional tourism market is flourishing. For instance, local movements of Chinese and Indian residents as well as other ethnicities, such as visiting their relatives and homeland, play a significant role in the

tourism market in the region. Moreover, traditional local pilgrimages, such as in Thai Buddhism, Islamic religious visits (*ziyara*) to holy places, and Hindu pilgrimages to local shrines, have gained popularity among local community members. Some of these traditional cultural travel events have transformed the contemporary way of tourism practices and gained popularity in the regional tourism market. These vernacular tourism movements seriously contribute to tourism development in the region. In this sense, tourism in Southeast Asia has huge potential regarding reconsidering the concept of tourism development beyond Western perspectives. In this sense, the reviewer also expects the contributors to clarify the current situation and issues of vernacular forms of tourism in their future studies.

Overall, the reviewer strongly recommends this book because its pioneering work will become essential for tourism studies in Southeast Asia. In addition, it will contribute to the variety of concepts in tourism development from the perspective of ethnographic works in the region.