



Using a political ecology approach for large scale tourism management

What is the issue?

Although much of the decision-making regarding the conflict between nature and society comes directly from the government, often, different political agendas affect a destination. Using a political ecology approach can determine multiple variables to understanding the deep nuances of how tourism development and environmental protection can co-exist. The political ecology approach is used to analyze human-environmental interactions, as it is impossible to separate the social, economic, and political processes that operate within a destination.

What did the researcher do?

This paper uses the theoretical context of political ecology as an in-depth way to examine and offer insight into factors affecting destination management and conservation on a larger scale where strict environmental measures are not in place. This case study used a mixed methods approach of both surveys and interviews to examine the Lake Simcoe Watershed in Ontario, Canada. First, quantitative online surveys were sent to local governments, NGOs, and recreation and tourism businesses in the region in order to assess key concerns and issues from multiple groups. Second, 39 semi-structured interviews were then conducted with key stakeholders.

Why is this research Useful?

Although there are other policy approaches, and indeed power influences which should not be dismissed, using a political ecology approach has illustrated that policy and decision makers can acknowledge the political, economic and relative power and influence that are key elements of political ecology that may achieve more effective public participation and governance. This research outlined a number of themes that affect the management of a destination including accessibility, governance, transportation/labour, regulation, environmental

degradation, leadership and marketing, awareness and development .

What were the outcomes?

Findings from this study found that different user groups are eager to work towards having more environmentally sustainable tourism and recreation put in place as they realize that this is best for their businesses, the community and the economy at large. This study showcases the need for an approach to management that acknowledges the economic, social and political struggles of environmental science, yet also acknowledges that political and economic issues can be both effective and socially relevant. For destination management to consider environmental and social conflicts, awareness of unresolved conflicts and challenges need to be first outlined, understood and then addressed. In addition, solutions for these challenges must be a path of least resistance for businesses and other user groups if shifts and changes are to occur.

About the Researcher

Rachel Dodds is a Professor at the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Citation

Dodds, R. (2016) Using a political ecology approach for large scale regional tourism management International Journal of Tourism Policy, 6(3/4) 191-211

Keywords

Political ecology, stakeholders, destinations, conservation, conflict, watershed, Lake Simcoe, Ontario.

The Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Research

The Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Research was founded in 2010 to undertake both academic and industry projects that aid business, policy makers and the overall industry with key issues in hospitality and tourism.

For more information, please contact us:

The Institute for Hospitality and Tourism Research

Ted Rogers School of Management
55 Dundas Street West
9th floor, TRS-3-175
www.htmresearch.ca