

Sustainable Tourism Future

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This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca>.



The content of this course was developed by faculty from the following institutions:



Power, Resistance, & Tourism

Tourism is rarely, if ever, a spontaneous occurrence. Tourist destinations do not appear, fully formed, on a pristine landscape. They evolve and develop out of an economic imperative.

Whether a new coastal resort, an established ski town in the mountains, an urban cultural district, or any other locale that looks to draw people from elsewhere to generate revenue, the economic imperative is the battleground on which the shape and form of tourism development and its winners and loser are decided. The patterns of development are shaped exclusively through power relations.

In this module we'll be examining the concept of power and how it manifests to direct the positive and negative impacts of tourism.

We'll then be looking at how those with less access to the mechanisms of power, who by consequence, suffer the brunt of the negative impacts of tourism, can develop capacity and articulate their power to build a sustainable tourism future.

Pre-Module Readings

In preparation for this module, read the following information from the accompanying course notes booklet.

Mansilla López, J.A. (2019) [The neighbourhood as a class front. Social movements and urban tourism in Poblenou, Barcelona](https://revintsociologia.revistas.csic.es/index.php/revintsociologia/article/view/1028/1361), Revista Internacional de Sociología, 77:2. (CC BY 4.0)

<https://revintsociologia.revistas.csic.es/index.php/revintsociologia/article/view/1028/1361>

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the concept of power and apply it in the tourism development context.
- Analyze the role of social movements in empowering local stakeholders in the tourism development process.
- Evaluate the practices of collective action to exogenous tourism development.

Understand the concept of Power and apply it in the tourism development context.
Analyze the role that social movements and organized resistance plays in empowering local stakeholders in the tourism development process.
Evaluate the practices of collective action to exogenous tourism development.

Power

“Power is the ability of one entity to influence the action of another entity.”



At its most rudimentary, power is “the ability to impose one’s will or advance one’s own interest” (West 1994). (Reed, 1997)

It exists in “a relationship among social actors in which one social actor, A, can get another social actor, B, to do something that B would not otherwise have done” (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 3).

However, a more helpful conception of power is the degree of control over material, human, intellectual, and financial resources exercised by a group or individual. The control of these resources becomes a source of individual or social power.

This is not to say that power is exclusively an individual or “group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state (Foucault 1978:92).” While it may manifest as a form of non-violent subjugation and a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, this is not a full view of how power works.

Photo by Steve Kaiser in Unsplash

IS Everywhere



In contrast to its more repressive manifestations, power can also be productive and sometimes even emancipatory. For instance, the productive power of the individual, by means of cooperation, produces a collective power that can result in a more equitable distribution of resources (Marx in Feldman, 2019). We'll examine this aspect of power in greater detail when we talk about social movements.

Productive power example:

For now, let's use the simple example of a skyscraper. An individual may have the ability to build a rudimentary shelter but they will never have the productive power to build a skyscraper.

The example of the skyscraper highlights one other defining feature of how we currently understand power. That is, power cannot simply be possessed. No matter how skilled and strong one is, they will never be able to possess enough power, by themselves, to construct a skyscraper. To construct a skyscraper, an individual that wants to build such a complex structure must exercise their power to marshal others to assist.

In other words, "power is not a thing or a capacity which can be owned either by state, social class or particular individuals. Instead, it is a relation between different individuals and groups and only exists when it is being exercised." (Lynch, 2010)

Thus, the term power refers to sets of relations that exist between individuals, or that are strategically deployed by groups of individuals.” Which is why we talk about power in terms of power relations.

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Power Relations

“A queen is a queen only if she has subjects.”



To put it more succinctly, a queen is only a queen if she has subjects. If the people she claims to command do not abide, then she wields little power.

“Power is exercised every time a group or individual is dependent upon someone else for carrying out a role or task. Political leaders and followers, managers and employees, bureaucrats and clients, tour guides and parties all exercise power through the forms of cooperation and conflict they enact.” (Hall in Butler & Hinch, 2007;306)

In other words, individuals act as a conduit of power, rather than the source of power. A further important characteristic is that the sum of the heterogeneous relations that involve power is much greater than that of the individual parts. (Bramwell & Meyer, 2006)

Agents and Targets

So instead of thinking on people or groups as powerless and powerful we'll identify them as Agents and Targets of power and explain how power works through social actors, known as agents who, through their affiliation to sources of power, are trying to get another social actor, known as targets, to do something they would not otherwise have done.

“While power is performed and cannot simply be “possessed”, the actors concerned may

perceive it to be something that people either have or lack. Thus, an agent may have a reputation for being powerful, based on hearsay or direct knowledge of past outcomes arising from the structure of relations in which that actor is embedded.” (Bramwell & Meyer, 2006)

Photo by Culum Canally (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

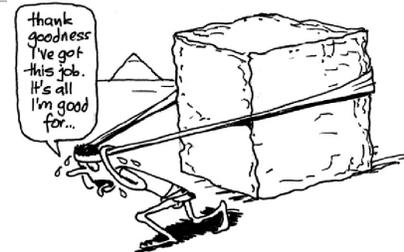
Types of Power



Visible Power



Hidden Power



Invisible Power

Visible power includes the aspects of political power that we 'see' – formal rules, structures, institutions and procedures informing decision- making. In other words, it is about how those people with power use existing procedures and structures to control the actions of others. Examples include: elections, political parties, budget, laws etc.

Hidden power is exercised when powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by setting and manipulating agendas and marginalising the concerns and voices of less powerful groups. Those with power see and understand these rules of the game; others don't. Examples include: quality of some consultation processes that exclude some voices; and setting the agenda behind the scene.

Invisible power operates in ways in which people will adopt belief systems that are created by those with power. Problems and issues are kept away not only from the decision-making table but also from the minds and hearts of different people including those affected by these decisions. This is when powerlessness is internalised. Examples include: negative stereotypes that limit the roles of certain groups.

Image taken by Debby Hudson @ Unsplash

Sources of Power

- coercive
- reward
- legitimate
- expert
- referent
- informational



Power is gained by drawing on various sources which include capital (financial, natural, physical, social, human), labour and consumer power, culture, location and geography, information, knowledge, networks, technology, physicality (e.g. age, sex, health or physicality ability) and personality (e.g. charisma). This understanding challenges the view of power as limited to a zero-sum game – in other words, a finite resource that needs to be taken away from others. (Hunjan & Pettit, 2011) Power: A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change (https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2011/11/09211812/Power-A-Practical-Guide-for-Facilitating-Social-Change_0.pdf)

To get a more clear understanding of how these sources of power are operationalized to advantage one social actor over another we'll look at French and Raven's formative typology of power within an organization.

(1) coercive power stems from the agent's ability to punish the target or to prevent him or her from obtaining desired rewards;

(2) reward power refers to the agent's capacity to reward the target for desirable behavior;

(3) legitimate power is based on the agent's formal authority, and refers to perceptions about the prerogatives, obligations, and responsibilities associated with particular positions in

organization or social system;

(4) expert power arises from the attribution of expertise, ability, or knowledge to the influencing agent;

(5) referent power arises when the target person identifies with the influencing agent; and

(6) informational power results from a person's ability to control the information that others need to accomplish something.

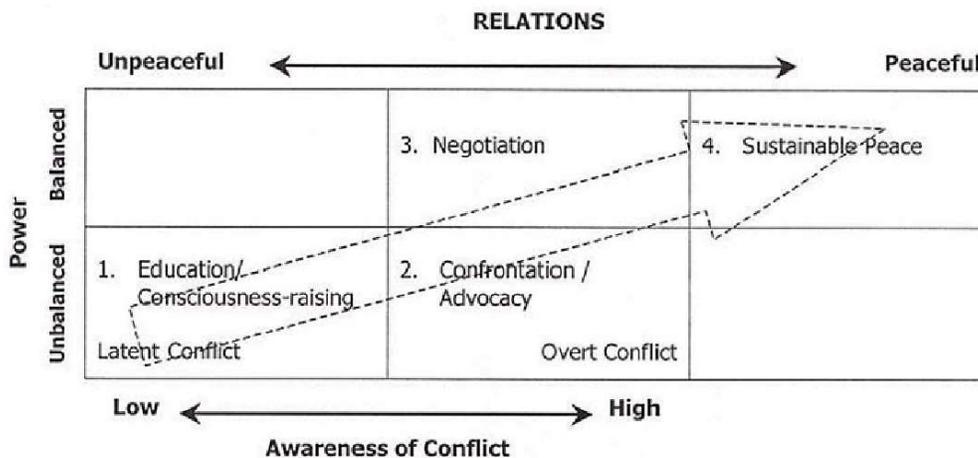
In an organization, power is derived from the opportunities inherent in the person's position including legitimate power, coercive power, reward power, and informational power as well as from personal and interpersonal attributes including referent power and expert power (French & Raven, 1959 in Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002).

In other words, the source of these powers comes from either the agents position within an organization or their personal relationship with the target.

Now let's examine at how power relations manifest in phenomenon of tourism.

Photo by Culum Canally (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Power Imbalance



Now that we have seen how power flows through agents to targets of the touristic gaze to create a dynamic, interwoven relationship that influences the behavior of both locals and tourists let's turn our attention to the more contentious topic of imbalances in power relations and tourism.

To this point we've discussed the repressive and productive mechanisms of power as being exercised through cooperation and conflict in an interplay of social actors. However, we have not examined the concept power as it relates to subjugation and emancipation.

Typically, there are indeed unequal power relations among the constellation of individuals and groups involved in tourism, especially in the business of tourism. This inequality in power relations arises from groups or individuals having greater or lesser access to the sources used to exercise power.

This can result in targets with less access to power sources being further excluded by agents with important resources deciding not to engage with these targets, or doing so only covertly. To examine power imbalance, we'll now focus on the inclusion and exclusion of different actors in the exercise of power. (Bramwell & Meyer, 2006)

"The relationship between the tourist and the local is routinely depicted as socioeconomic in

character; tourists and locals interact either in a warm social milieu as guests and hosts, or in the economic marketplace as consumers and producers. Where a power relationship is perceived to exist, as between First World tourists and Third, this power is interpreted as colonial and imperialistic with a high potential for negative distributional outcomes. With this view, the influences of the tourist on the social world are expected to be at best benign, while more likely to be seriously negative...These influences include the display of materialistic consumerism, the commodification of culture, and the one-sided domination and exploitation of members of visited societies by the privileged class.” (Cheong and Miller, 2000). These impacts are attributable to the imbalance in relations to power between the tourist and the host where the tourist has the access to the resources to reward, coerce, and legitimate aspects of the host community while, particularly in a First-Third World context, the host has fewer access to the resources allow them to impact the tourist’s community.

Examining the processes of tourism development gives us an opportunity to explore issue of power imbalance in greater detail.

VeneKlasen with Miller (2006) Dynamics of Power, Inclusion, and Exclusion, Nonprofit Online News & The Gilbert Center
<http://intergroupresources.com/rc/RESOURCE%20CENTER/OWEN%27S%20CATEGORIZATION%20OF%20RC/5%20-%20Primers%20&%20additional%20resources/5f-%20Power/dynamics%20of%20power.pdf>

Power & Tourism

The Touristic Gaze



Power is always present in relationships between individual and institutional actors and the practice of tourism is replete with relationships. (Hall in Butler & Hinch, 2007;306)

Touristic Gaze:

The complexity of power relations in tourism is best explored by examining the concept of the Touristic Gaze. The touristic gaze is what a person looks at and, as important, what they don't look at while engaging in a tourism experience. (Cheong and Miller, 2000)

Keeping with the theme of Agents and Targets with Agents using their affiliation to sources of power to influence the behavior of Targets, let's look at the tourist experience from two vantage points; first, the local as an agent and second, the tourist as an agent.

The local as an agent – "In direct interactions with tourists, local agents employ strategies of power that entail education, instruction, persuasion, advice, interpretation, surveillance, and coercion. Local agents are buffers who protect tourists from the ethnocentrism of locals and locals from the prejudices of tourists via the communication of cultural manners and mores. Local agents also contribute as experts in shaping the decisions tourists make in purchasing commodities and services, and the conclusions they draw in appreciating or devaluing amenities and other features of the destination. Local agents, then, transmit distinctions.

They influence what tourists can and cannot do, where they can and cannot go, and what they select and reject.”

The tourist as an agent – The tourist as an agent directs their gaze to features of a destination that separate them from their everyday experience. Because these features are taken to be out of the ordinary, there is a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of a destination than is normally found in everyday life. Thus, different forms of social patterning evolve from the targets of this gaze when tourism professionals reproduce ever-new novel objects of the tourist gaze. Consequently, those aspects of a destination that do not present a break from the tourists’ everyday experience, but which represent the totality of a socioeconomic life in a tourist destination, are absent from representations of the destination.

Photo by Culum Canally (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Power & Tourism Development

“Full political empowerment is when ownership of development problems and benefits lies in the hands of the destination community.” (Timothy, 2006)

To examine the concept power relations in tourism development we’re going to start from the basic egalitarian premise that those most impacted by tourism should have the greatest control over how it is developed.

“From the community perspective, when people are able to organize and mobilize themselves for the common good, they will become more politically powerful. Communities then can have the authority to instigate tourism development or reject it, although given the multifaceted nature of communities, not all people will have equal opportunity to accept or reject.” (Timothy in Church and Coles, 2006;103)

“Full political empowerment is when ownership of development problems and benefits lies in the hands of the destination community.” (Timothy in Church and Coles, 2006)

“Yet power is not evenly distributed within a community and some groups and individuals have the ability to exert greater influence over the tourism planning process than others through their access to financial resources, expertise, public relations, media, knowledge, and time to put into contested situations. Therefore, in some circumstances, the level of wider public involvement in tourism planning can be more accurately described as a form of tokenism in which decisions or the direction of decisions has already been prescribed by local government by virtue of other policies and decisions. For example, that which led to the

election of certain representatives over others. Communities rarely have the opportunity to say 'no' in the longer term, nor can decisions easily be undone." (Hall in Singh, Timothy, and Dowling, 2003)

"Decisions affecting tourism, the nature of government involvement in tourism, the structure of agencies responsible for tourism development, management, marketing, and promotion, the nature of tourism in tourism development, and the identification and representation of tourism resources and attractions all emerge from a political process. This process involves actors (individuals, interest groups, and public and private organizations) in a struggle for power." (Hall in Singh, Timothy, and Dowling, 2003; 101)

"those who benefit from tourism development may well be placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their interests through the structures and institutions by which communities are managed" (Hall, 2003)

It was seen, for example, how business people from "outside" became powerful local economic actors and gained influence in the island's politics, the local municipalities gave priority to pro-growth policies in response to their economic difficulties, and some key island-wide policy debates concentrated on the tensions between economic growth and environmental protection. (Bramwell & Meyer, 2006)

"When we see the conceptual connection between the idea of power and the idea of responsibility, we can see more clearly why those who exercise power are not eager to acknowledge the fact, while those who take a critical perspective of existing social relationships are eager to attribute power to those in privileged positions. For to acknowledge power over others is to implicate oneself in responsibility for certain events and to put oneself in a position where justification for the limits placed on others is expected. To attribute power to another, then, is not simply to describe his role in some perfectly neutral sense, but is more like accusing him of something, which is then to be denied or justified." (Connolly, 1974, p. 97)

"Non-decision-making exists 'to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of political conflicts, that person or group has power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p. 8). The role of non-decision-making is now widely acknowledged in the political literature given that political actors, and organisations 'can leave selected topics undiscussed for what they consider their own advantage' (Holmes, 1988, p. 22)." (Hall in Butler & Hinch, 2007;309)

"Any satisfactory account of politics, and the political must contain the element of human conflict; of groups of human beings in constant struggle with each other over resources and ideas about the distribution of resources. (Thrift & Forbes, 1983: 247)"

Power Redistribution for a Sustainable Tourism Future

Community based planning doesn't necessarily lead to sustainable tourism.

One of the fallacies of tourism development is that a community based planning process necessarily leads to sustainable tourism. While it may represent an improvement on the top-down approach to developing a tourism product, it is often fraught with the problems of tokenism and greenwashing.

“The concept of community has been significant in tourism, and tourism planning in particular, for over 20 years. Indeed, the central role of the ‘community’ in tourism planning has come to be recognized as one of the tenets of sustainable and socially responsible tourism. However, while community-based planning is an important driver in academic and bureaucratic approaches to tourism development, it is important to recognize that such an approach does not automatically lead to either sustainable tourism development or even a reduction in the amount of conflict surrounding tourism development.” (Hall in Singh, Timothy, and Dowling, 2003)

“Empowerment in tourism from the social perspective should enhance the destination community’s equilibrium and cohesiveness. As the individual and other interested groups work together for the good of the entire community, social cohesiveness is enhanced, and community services improve (e.g. schools, health care, infrastructure) through the vehicle of tourism.” (Timothy in Church and Coles, 2006;103)

“Power cannot be treated as complete control or absolute subservience. It is only through the articulation of resistance that power can spread through the social field. Resistance is an internal property of power. It is a condition of operation that remains inherent to power itself. Resistance is everywhere and at every level. (Lynch, 2010)”

Power Review Slide

- Power is Everywhere
- Power is Relational
- Access to Sources of Power are not Shared Equally

Discussion Question

- Try to think about times when you have drawn on your own personal sources of power to help you to achieve something. When might these same sources of power have been an obstacle to achieving change?
- Try to think about people who you would describe as powerful, and then think about the contexts in which these people might be powerless and why.

Source Hunjan & Pettit, 2011

Learning Activity

- Can you think of institutions or people that exercise hidden power in the tourism development process?
- What sources of power do they draw on to influence the process?
- Provide an example.



Social Movements

Photo by Culum Canally

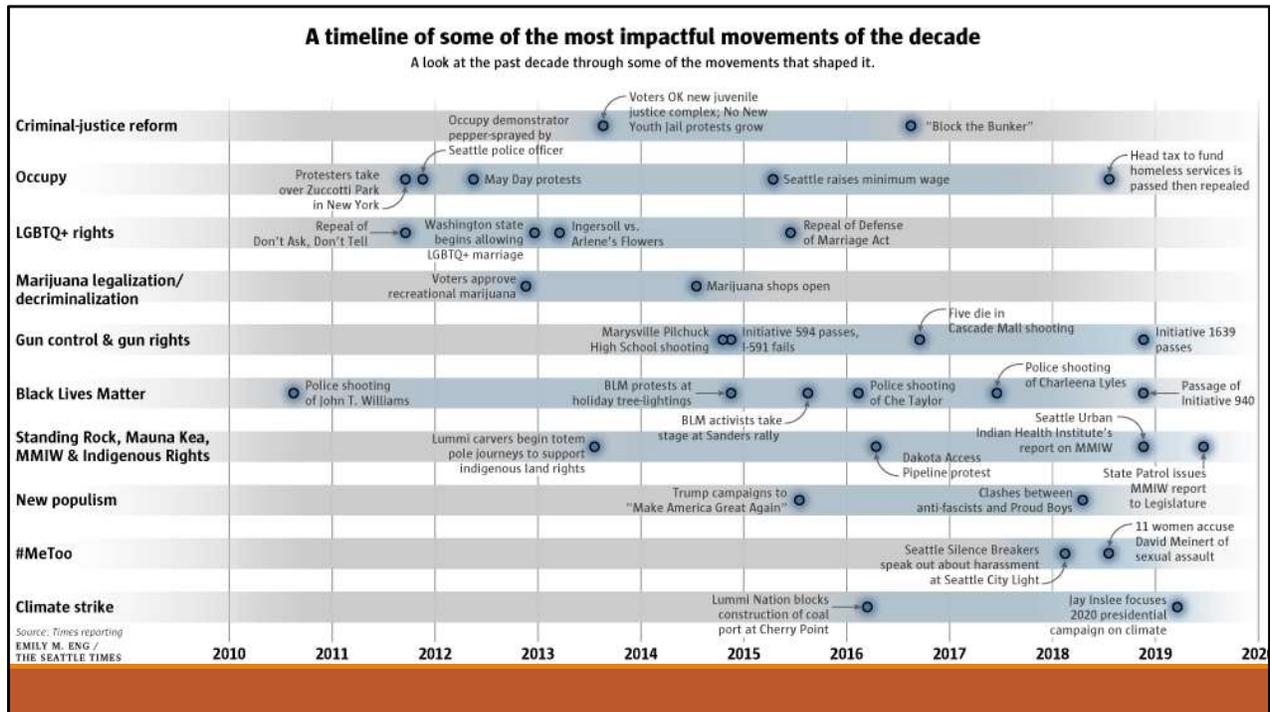
Social Movements

“an organized effort by a significant number of people to change or resist change in some major aspects of society”

At the simplest level, modern social movements are “an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society” (Marshall, 1994, p. 489). Generally, social movements take place outside the mainstream political system. They often consist of people who either choose to be or are excluded from routine institutionalized channels of participation.

Made up of individual actors and organizations that share some salient dimensions of collective identity who are working in a somewhat organized and sustained way over time toward a common goal of social, political, or cultural change, social movements don't just exhibit uneasy relationships with the state and its various manifestations on regional and local levels. The same often holds true for the dealings of social movements with other institutions beyond the state itself. (Coy, 2018) *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*

Examples include the civil rights movements in the United States during the 50s and 60s, the anti-nuclear arms movements in Europe in the 70s and 80s, and the nearly global antiapartheid movement of the 80s and 90s, anti-globalization, BDS, Black Lives Matter (Almeida, 2019).



<https://www.seattletimes.com/life/a-look-back-at-10-of-the-biggest-social-movements-of-the-2010s-and-how-they-shaped-seattle/>

Social Movements (continued)

- collective challenges
- social networks, common purposes, and cultural frameworks
- building solidarity to sustain collective action

Social movements bring people together in sustained interaction with opponents. It entails aggregating people with different demands and identities and in different locations in concerted campaigns of collective action. This involves, first, mounting collective challenges; second, drawing on social networks, common purposes, and cultural frameworks; and, third, building solidarity through connective structures and collective identities to sustain collective action. These are the main processes of social movements. Tarrow, S. G. (1998) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*

Let's examine the three central elements of a social movement.

Core Movement Elements

Sustained Collective Mobilization



The Core Movement Elements

Sustained Collective Mobilization

Social movements are collective and sustained over a period of time. The larger the scale of collective action, the longer the mobilization should endure to be considered a “movement.” Local neighborhood and community movements may last for only a few months or a year as they tend to have short-term and specific goals, such as preventing pollution from a nearby facility or demanding street lights for nighttime safety. Larger national-level mobilizations likely need to sustain themselves for at least a year to be considered a social movement. In contrast, a single demonstration or protest does not constitute a social movement. At the same time, collective actors must find ways to maintain momentum and unity. Preexisting organizations, social relationships of friends, neighbors, the workplace, schools, ethnic ties, collective identities, and a variety of resources assist in prolonging the mobilization process (Almeida, 2019). *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*

Photo by Clay Banks in Unsplash

Core
Movement
Elements

Excluded Social Groups



The Core Movement Elements

Excluded Social Groups

Social movements are largely constituted by groups with relatively less political and economic power. Their exclusionary status provides the rationale for taking the social movement form (Burawoy 2017; Mora et al. 2017). Non-excluded groups benefit from more routine access to government and economic elites in terms of having their voices heard, and are relatively more likely to receive favorable resolutions for their grievances via petitions, elections, lobbying, and meetings with officials. Excluded groups (along racial, economic, citizenship, and gender lines, among many others) lack this routine access and may at times resort to less conventional forms of seeking influence to gain the attention of authorities and power brokers.

(Almeida, 2019). *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*

Photo by Sushil Nash in Unsplash CC BY

Core Movement Elements

Social, Economic, and Environmental Harms



The Core Movement Elements

Social, Economic, and Environmental Harms

A central motivation for social movement mobilization involves real and perceived harms. A critical mass of individuals must come under the threat of a particular harm, such as discrimination, job loss, or environmental health, that motivates them to unify and launch a social movement campaign, especially when institutional channels fail to resolve the issue at hand. Opportunities may also arrive to reduce long-standing harms, such as decades of discrimination or economic exploitation (Tarrow, 2011). Social movement mobilization is much more likely to materialize when large numbers of people mutually sense they are experiencing or suffering from similar circumstances. (Almeida, 2019). *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*

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Social Movements & Collective Action

“often the only recourse that ordinary people possess against better-equipped opponents or powerful states”

Recalling from our previous exploration of power. We know that “power cannot be treated as complete control or absolute subservience. It is only through the articulation of resistance that power can spread through the social field. Resistance is an internal property of power. It is a condition of operation that remains inherent to power itself. Resistance is everywhere and at every level.” (Lynch, 2010)

“Contentious collective action is the basis of social movements, not because movements are always violent or extreme, but because it is the main and often the only recourse that ordinary people possess against better-equipped opponents or powerful states. This does not mean that movements do nothing else but contend: they build organizations, elaborate ideologies, and socialize and mobilize constituencies, and their members engage in self-development and the construction of collective identities.” Tarrow, S. G. (1998). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*

Violence & Tourism



For many tourists, entrepreneurs and public policy designers alike, the idea that violence and dispossession define tourism is counter-intuitive. Many people associate tourism with being on vacation, with paradisiacal landscapes, and just getting away from everyday life. For others, however, everyday tourism practices are intimately related to diverse expressions of violence in various forms, of which dispossession is a prominent expression. This distinction often hinges on one's socio-spatial positioning and embodiment, as well as on one's location within the tourism industry's direct or indirect activities – whether or not one is the tourist, the “host”, the developer, the hustler, the sex worker, hospitality staff or the fisherman. Violence in tourism settings comes in the form of physical, horrific, extra-ordinary events, such as terrorist attacks and narco-turf wars, but violence also manifests in the spaces and silences of everyday life, in the loss of land, community and language. Devine & Ojeda (2017) Violence and dispossession in tourism development a critical geographical approach

Image:<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/837142/barcelona-spain-tourists-violence-catalonia-independence>

Social Movements, Collective Action & Tourism



“At the simplest level, modern social movements are “an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society” (Marshall, 1994, p. 489). Generally, social movements take place outside the mainstream political system. They often consist of people who either choose to be or are excluded from routine institutionalized channels of participation.” (Coy, 2018)

In other words, social movements are the consequence of a power imbalance. They are an outgrowth of individuals or groups that have little affiliation with the sources of power that effect changes in their lives. Put another way, social movements become a source of power for people who are more often targets of institutional power rather than the agents.

“Made up of individual actors and organizations that share some salient dimensions of collective identity who are working in a somewhat organized and sustained way over time toward a common goal of social, political, or cultural change, social movements don’t just exhibit uneasy relationships with the state and its various manifestations on regional and local levels. The same often holds true for the dealings of social movements with other institutions beyond the state itself.” (Coy, 2018) *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*.

Barcelona reading

In a modern context, indigenous peoples are integral to the discussion of social movements and tourism.



Hawaii Superferry

A Case Study in Collective Action

“On August 26th, 2007, the Hawaiian Superferry began service from Honolulu on Oahu to Lihue on Kauai. The inaugural voyage made national news that evening. When the Superferry arrived at Nawiliwili Harbor, Kauai, protesters paddled out into the harbor on surfboards and kayaks to put their bodies between the ferry and their shores (TenBruggencate & Daysog, 2007). The protesters delayed the ferry for 90 minutes, although the Coast Guard eventually managed to contain the protest enough for the ferry to dock (Segal, 2007). A few cars disembarked, but those passengers then found their way blocked by hundreds more protesters on land. Eventually, Superferry executives made the decision to recall the passengers and return to Oahu. A few passengers were left stranded in Kauai. The following day, an even larger group of Kauai surfboard protesters were able to stay in the water long enough to prevent the ferry from docking at Nawiliwili Harbor (KHON2 5:00 news, 8/27/07). The Superferry was forced to return to Honolulu without touching Kauai shores a second time. On August 28th, the Hawaiian Superferry announced that it would be suspending service to Kauai indefinitely (KHON2 10:00 news, 8/28/07).” in (Corlew 2009)

Kauai, Hawaii

Tourism is the largest sector of the economy

- 1,271,000 visitors a year
- 27,000 total jobs
- 6,800 in accommodation and food services

“The protests during the Hawaiian Superferry’s first days of service were not without preamble. The Superferry had been embroiled in controversy for two and a half years, during which time legal and political battles, community demonstrations, and petitions challenged the wisdom that had led the State to support the introduction of an interisland ferry system to Hawai`i waters. Numerous scathing letters to the editor appeared in local newspapers from both sides of the debate.

Supporters of the Superferry were very quick to point out potential benefits to the State, including hundreds of new jobs, cheaper inter-island travel and shipment, the ability to quickly transport family vehicles between islands, further options for business, and the potential to “integrate the islands’ economy” (Martin, 2004). To supporters, there was no question of the benefit of the Superferry to the State.

In the planning stages for the interisland ferry, “the Superferry had been busy seeking investors, political support, harbor renovations (paid by the State), and environmental exemptions in a number of quiet and sometimes closed-door conversations. Much of these dealings were not brought to light until years after the final decisions had been announced (DePledge, 2008a; DePledge, 2008b; Paik & Mander, 2009). Most hotly contested among these decisions was the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) exemption. State environmental law required an EIS be performed when State funds or State lands were used.

Because each of the islands has its own unique ecosystem, each of which is under continual threat from invasive species from the other islands and beyond, and further because of the Native Hawaiian cultural tradition of connection to the `aina, or land, the EIS exemption decision was for many as inexplicable as it was infuriating. Even more infuriating was the consistent failure of the Superferry and State government agencies to explain the reasoning behind the decision or to hear arguments against the exemption. (Corlew, 2009)”



Social Movement Stakeholders

- Activist Coalitions
- Hui-R (Listserve)
- Social Media
- Island Breath Blog
- NGOs
- Surfrider & Sierra Club
- Local Business Owners
- Kauai's Best Whale Tours



By the time the Department of Transportation held a public meeting in June 2006, the community was already outraged not only at the exemption, but at the Superferry's attitude which seemed to indicate they were condescending to speak with the Kauai community at all, but that the decisions were long since final. Said Rich Hoepfner, who went to the meeting "that's when I started the petition because at those meetings they told what they were gonna do, and everybody said, well bullshit." When community members were told after the fact rather than asked for their input, they were galvanized into action. David Dinner said, "The people at that meeting got irate at the arrogance at the way it was presented, and over a period of time we developed a group that decided to do something about it." This group became the People for the Protection of Kauai.

Photo by Jonathan Jay in Island Breath (Protest on Shore)

Collective Action



Environmental Degradation

- Harm to whales
- Introduction of invasive species



Cultural Impacts

- Diminished access to sacred sites
- Increased crime



Unsustainable Growth

- Traffic
- Mega-resorts

The most vocal opponents comprised a large swath of the residents Kauai. They “began to distrust the Superferry after a political decision was made by the State government to forgo the Environmental Impact Survey (EIS) in early 2005 (Borreca, 2005). This decision should have allowed the Superferry to hasten its launch date, but instead brought unanticipated scrutiny to potential environmental, cultural, and community threats of Superferry service to the Neighbor Islands Kauai...

Opponents voiced concerns over invasive species, threat to the whale sanctuary, increased traffic, increased cars and pollution, and increased commercialization of the rural island communities. During the subsequent two and a half years, the issue became more and more volatile, culminating in the surfboard protest in August, 2007.”

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Photo by Jonathan Jay in Island Breath (OpenHouseProtest)

Photo by Chris Bailey in Hawaii Magazine

Photo by unknown in

<https://www.coolgeography.co.uk/GCSE/AQA/Tourism/Mass%20Tourism/Mass%20Tourism.htm>

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Collective Action Outcome

After nearly six years of controversy, the Superferry suspended service indefinitely. The Hawaii Superferry was then turned over to the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) and made available for future government use.

Photo by Culum Canally

Key Takeaways

- There's no such thing as a powerless group or individual.
- Social movements arise from a perceived power imbalance.
- Collective action is the main and often the only recourse that ordinary people possess against better-equipped opponents or powerful states.