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The Political Economy of Backpacker Tourism: Explorations of Tourism Actors' Embeddedness in Colombia

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Located in a broad Political Economy approach, this paper presents a new conceptual framework, based on Ferguson (2010) and Mosedale (2011), to assess the reciprocal relationship between tourism development and the power relations of the main actors within the backpacker tourism sector: backpackers; businesses catering for them; and tourism policy makers. We explore how these power relations change through the actors' social, cultural and political embeddedness. An ethnographic multi-method approach was applied to the under-researched Latin American context with fieldwork conducted in Salento, Colombia. The analysis demonstrates that power inequalities exist concerning knowledge, financial and social power that did not seem to be diminished by backpacker tourism development. We further found that social and cultural embeddedness informed the political embeddedness of the actors. Our findings have important implications for policy makers addressing power inequalities in tourism.

Keywords: Embeddedness, Tourism Development, Backpacker Tourism, Political Economy of Tourism, Colombia

1 Introduction

Although tourism has been widely researched in various fields, gaps remain in the literature about tourism development (Sharpley and Telfer, 2014). In particular, it is not fully understood how tourism development progresses, who drives this development, and what factors influence it. Moreover, while many development scholars propose theoretical frameworks, studies on tourism commonly concentrate on more practical, policy-orientated problems. Hence, scholars such as Britton (1991), Hannam (2002) and Tribe (2010) have called for further theorisation in tourism research. In particular, Hannam (2002, p. 227) argued that "[by] developing more sophisticated theoretical frameworks we may actually hear better the voices of people involved in processes of tourism development." A Political Economy (PE) approach links the perspectives of economic development and political decision-making (Sen, 2001). It is concerned with the politics of decision-making (Nunkoo & Smith, 2013), and the underlying structures and social relations influencing the decision-making process (Mosedale, 2011).

Bramwell (2011) argues that PE would be a useful approach to study tourism development and the government processes influencing it, as it helps to provide further theorisation of tourism's many economic forms, such as niche and alternative tourism. Researchers (e.g. Bianchi, 2015, 2018; Bramwell, 2011; Britton, 1980; Dieke, 2000; Duffy 2006; 2000; Mosedale, 2015; 2011) have called for more engagement with the PE of tourism, and in particular the actors that drive tourism development, as they have so far been overlooked. This paper addresses this research gap by proposing a conceptual framework that links tourism and development studies. In our case, we adopt a PE approach to better understand the relationship between these actors, and apply it to a backpacker tourism context.

Backpacker tourism emerged in the early 1980s, arguably as a development from earlier overland 'hippy' travel (Cohen, 1973; Hampton, 2013). Researchers such as Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) and Pearce (1990) described backpacking as a form of tourism characterised by independent travelling, utilisation of budget accommodation, longer holidays and itinerary flexibility. For the purpose of this research, we applied these criteria to identify backpackers, still acknowledging, however, recent debates in the literature about who actually backpackers are and what makes them backpackers (Dayour et al., 2017, Zhang et al., 2018, Chen et al., 2020).

Although increasing numbers of academic studies of backpacker tourism have been conducted in the past 20 years, e.g. with a focus on its economic effects (e.g. Dayour et al., 2016; Hampton, 1998; 2003, Scheyvens, 2002) and on host-guest relationships (e.g. Chan, 2006; Luo et al, 2015), the impact on the power relations between the actors of tourism development, i.e. the backpackers, the host communities with their businesses, and the governmental actors, has been little explored.

Hampton (1998) and Scheyvens (2002) further argue that backpacker tourism has a higher economic impact on the poorer part of the population and backpackers distribute their spending over wider geographical regions than conventional mass tourism, leading to less enclavic tourism development (Cohen, 2018). While backpacker tourism and its implications for local communities have been researched in South East Asia and Australia (e.g. Hampton 2010, 2003; Hannam & Ateljevic, 2007; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010), there is very little research in Latin America, hence the selection of the Colombian context for this research.

The aim of this paper is to examine the complex nature of the relationships between tourism development and the three main tourism actors in the backpacker

industry, i.e. the backpackers, the businesses catering to them, and the governmental actors. In more detail, we explore the relationships between the actors in order to understand existing power relations which subsequently influence tourism development. Next to exploring the power relations, we use Mosedale's (2011) concept of social, cultural and political embeddedness as a framework as it considers the context in which the actors operate: Social embeddedness of tourism actors examines the influence of social relations and how these are articulated; cultural embeddedness analyses the influence of shared values and understandings on economic activities, whereas political embeddedness refers to the relationship between the private and public sectors and how they influence each other's decision-making (Mosedale, 2011).

In this research, we develop a conceptual framework which builds on the work of Mosedale (2011) and Fergusson (2011), assessing how the social, cultural and political embeddedness and the power relations between the three actors influence, and are influenced by, small-scale backpacker tourism development, and what drives this development.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: the next section discusses the literature review; this is followed by developing the conceptual framework, and then by a discussion of the methodology, before presenting the results; lastly, we detail the paper's contribution as well as limitations, and areas for further research.

2 Literature review: Theorising the Political Economy of Tourism

2.1 Tourism Development and Political Economy

Since the early 1980s research has examined tourism and PE, yet there is considerable potential for further work in this area (Bianchi, 2018). Gibson (2009; 2008) points out that although scholars such as Britton (1982) and Debbage and Ioannides (2004) had called for a more serious commitment to studying tourism, there is still room for more critical engagement of tourism studies with PE topics. Gibson (2009) also argues that much tourism research engages with social and cultural topics, but less so with the PE of tourism. This may lead to limited predictive power of the social and economic impact of tourism (Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). More recently, Cole's (2017) research on the relationship of water usage, tourism and gender suggests that gendered power relations are (re)produced through the water-tourism-gender nexus, and therefore power relations are important to analyse. Bramwell (2011) argues that a PE approach could add in

analysing backpacker tourism's complex issues such as networks and power relations. However, the tourism literature that explicitly engages with PE and power relations remains limited.

To anchor the discussion in the context of PE, this paper mainly refers to several types of power within tourism: knowledge power; financial and bargaining power; and social power. This study follows Weber (1947, p. 152), who defined power as "the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them". The usage of 'power' in this paper also includes Foucault's (1978) notion of power as a relationship rather than an entity. We follow Cheong and Miller (2000) who argued that tourism studies need to move away from thinking of tourists having the power over the dominated locals at the destination. Instead, it is a reciprocal relationship between the actors.

The concept of knowledge power is also based on Foucault (1980, p. 52) who claimed that the "exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power", hence creating the concept of 'power-knowledge'. It can therefore be argued that power and knowledge are linked (Hall, 2006). For this paper, knowledge power combines the notions of knowledge held by groups or people, for example from tourism experience, and the power that can come with having that knowledge.

Financial power signifies the power a person or a group may or may not hold over another group due to their financial situation (Seabrooke, 2006). This can then influence the power relations both ways.

Bargaining power in tourism has been influenced through various developments such as the internet for information-sharing (Buhalis & Zoge, 2007). Further, Ashley et al. (2000) found that small-scale tourism producers possessed no bargaining power with investors. While there seems to be no formal definition within tourism studies, this paper defines bargaining power loosely following Porter's (2008; 1979) supplier power and buyer power. The supplier (the tourism producer) or the buyer (the tourist) exercises power over the other through, for example, the price or the quality of the offered tourism product. These different forms of power may then influence the social power of the actors of tourism development (and vice versa).

Social power can be described as the influence a person or group could hold over another (French, Raven & Cartwright 1959); for example, a well-regarded social

standing within the community can lead to higher bargaining power over local suppliers.

Many studies addressing PE issues within tourism development (Bianchi, 2015; Freitag, 1994; Britton, 1982, 1980) focus on transnational corporations (TNCs) as driving economic growth in developing countries. However, within the tourism industries, apart from capital-intensive sectors such as international hotels and airlines, most enterprises are small and medium-sized businesses (OECD, 2005), including backpacker tourism businesses (Hampton, 2003; 1998).

While it is argued that only global companies determine economic development (Bianchi, 2011; Harvey, 2003), this paper follows Hampton (2003) and Shaw and Williams' (2002) argument that local SMEs equally foster economic development at a local and regional level. In addition, the governmental actors play a central role in tourism development and planning (Bramwell, 2011). With the rise of neoliberalism, governance has been de- and re-regulated on an international, national, regional and local level (Shaw & Williams, 2004). The involvement of the government in developing tourism has often been criticised for being politically unfair to local communities in terms of imposing tourism planning (Moscardo, 2011), having hidden agendas (Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010) and not always protecting the societal interests (Bramwell, 2011; Ruhanen, 2013).

Thus, to provide a holistic analysis, the paper's conceptual framework also includes governmental actors when assessing the relationship between backpacker tourism development and the power relations of the main tourism actors.

2.2. The Role of Alternative and Backpacker Tourism

Mosedale (2011, p. 104) raises the question whether "alternative forms of tourism occupy different spaces between the market and state or … merely reproduce dominant relationships in a different form". Mowforth and Munt (2003) argue that alternative forms of tourism, such as backpacker tourism, impacts on destinations.

The demand for alternative forms of travel was also driven in the 1960s and 1970s by the Western youth who became interested in ecology, local cultures and spirituality. This trend expressed itself, for example, through the development of the overland 'hippy trail' from Istanbul via Kabul, Kathmandu to Bali, and subsequently, the emergence of backpacker tourism (Cohen, 1973; Hampton, 2013). Arguably, not

only the tourism providers but also tourists, as customers, drove the development of alternative tourism, such as backpacker tourism, which was typically not formally planned, but developed organically (Hampton, 1998).

The central role of the local community for tourism development has been widely recognised (e.g. Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Previous research has identified greater engagement of the local community within tourism employment (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2005; Hampton, 2003). This is particularly true for alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, community-based tourism and backpacker tourism, which are all characterised by being small-scale, community-orientated and low entry barriers. This allows the local community to participate in tourism as entrepreneurs due to low initiating costs, or as employees (Hampton, 2003, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002).

Empowering locals to run their own businesses has positive effects on the self-esteem of a community and its people, and potentially increases their bargaining power with governmental actors (Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002). However, power inequalities may occur within communities, as they are not homogenous, but consist of different groups with different interests. Brenner and Fricke (2007) found that in Mexico usually foreigners or outsiders from the metropolitan regions had more financial power and connections, which allowed them to enter the backpacker tourism market more easily, especially in rural areas. Based on the limited and contrary findings of previous studies on power imbalances between the actors of backpacker tourism, we argue that the power relations within the community groups need further investigation to assess their relationship with backpacker tourism development.

3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework was developed to capture the complex power relationships between the three main tourism actors (backpackers, the businesses catering for them, and the governmental actors) and tourism development, using a PE approach. These complex relationships are impacted by the place-specific context which is defined by the social, cultural and political dimensions, as indicated by Mosedale's (2011) work. Social embeddedness of tourism actors examines the influence of social relations and how these are articulated; cultural embeddedness analyses the influence of shared values and understandings on economic activities, whereas political embeddedness refers to the relationship between the private and public sectors and how they influence

each other's decision-making (Mosedale, 2011). This provides the conceptual foundation of our study as it illustrates the complexity of the relationships between the three tourism actors and their resulting power relations. We focus specifically on knowledge, financial, bargaining, and social power as they seemed the most prevalent forms of power in our study, as defined earlier.

To put Mosedale's (2011) conceptual outline into context, we further acknowledge the relevance of Ferguson's (2011) work, who explicitly argued for the relevance of small-scale actors in developing countries in order to understand the PE of tourism development. Ferguson (2011) further points out that it is necessary to understand how communities and also different groups within these communities are affected by tourism development, and how this reshapes local (power) structures. As the community acts as a link between the global (tourism industry) and the individual (locals) it is situated in a field of tension between different interests (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). Following this call, we differentiate the SMEs into local, national and international tourism entrepreneurs.

To advance Mosedale's (2011) theoretical approach and Ferguson's (2011) focus on producers of tourism services only, in this research also the impact of consumers on the power relations within the community are investigated, as well as the power differences within various consumer groups. This supports the call by Ateljevic (2000) that production and consumption are intrinsically interlinked and should therefore be considered simultaneously in one study. Thereby we allow for a holistic understanding of the power relations between the three main tourism actors and tourism development.

In our paper, on the consumption side, we distinguish between backpackers from Latin America and outside Latin America, as Latin American independent travellers are an under-researched group (Hampton, 2013). On the production side, we focus on SMEs that primarily cater to backpackers. Those SMEs are part of the community, and their decision-making may be influenced by actions of the community, such as the use of sacred sites or the security situation. Being part of the community has also further implications for power structures, as to who drives the decision-making in the community. Studies by Holland (2000) and Reed (1997), for example, found that it is usually the less influential groups such as local communities who are marginalised in tourism development because of the unbalanced power relations. These may also occur,

because decisions are made by a variety of actors, both from within the community or externally, for example by regional or national government institutions. Power issues are therefore important to analyse as part of understanding the PE of global tourism and its influence on local communities.

The new conceptual framework proposed in this paper (Figure 1) allows a holistic analysis to understand the complex nature of the reciprocal relationships between tourism development and the three main tourism actors.

4 Methodology

This paper aims to shed light on the complex and dynamic nature of the relationship between tourism development and the three main backpacker tourism actors. Specifically it examines how these actors and their socially, culturally and politically embeddedness influence, and are influenced by, backpacker tourism development. Our study set out to address the research aim by using qualitative research as it "… seeks to understand the world through interacting with, empathising with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors." (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003, p. 57). The research design was informed by the conceptual framework outlined earlier and this ensured that the data collection was rigorous and purposeful and allowed the research to validate and enhance the original theoretical framework (Ghauri & Firth, 2009).

In order to gain an understanding of the Colombian backpacker tourism phenomenon, qualitative research methods linked to ethnography, such as semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic observations, were employed for data collection. To address the research questions, descriptions and perceptions of the backpacker tourism actors and their relationships with each other were needed. Qualitative data generation allows for a more flexible approach to include the description of social context in which the data is created (Grix 2010). The researchers submerge themselves into the local context, which provides the possibility to uncover underlying issues through complex "thick descriptions" (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2013; Geertz 1973). It, therefore, provided the appropriate approach to address the research aim.

To give further transparency to the data collection process, it is important to situate the researchers carrying out the data collection and analysis (Ateljevic et al., 2005). The lead author is a white, European academic, someone who would be perceived as having a high status in Colombian society. She speaks Spanish fluently and

had previous knowledge of the fieldwork location due to a previous pilot study in 2012, which enabled her to position the research and herself as supportive of the interviewees when exploring issues around tourism development (especially regarding tourism businesses and the policy makers). This also allowed the lead author to reflect upon the respondents' travels, based on some shared characteristics due to her previous backpacking experiences. Another author also has extensive experience of backpacking which also informed the writing and analysis.

4.1 Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork was carried out in Colombia in January-February 2015 by one author. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with respondents from the main three tourism actors. In total n=28 interviews were conducted (in Spanish, English and German), which consisted of n=13 interviews with backpackers (although some interviews were conducted in groups with up to three backpackers); n=13 interviews with backpacker tourism business owners; and n=2 interviews with local and regional policy makers (Appendix 1: tables 1, 2 and 3). For data triangulation, further data was collected through ethnographic observations noted in a field diary, as well as through the analysis of policy documents and other literature such as newspaper articles and online forums (Decrop, 1999). Apart from verifying data, the field diary also provided room for reflection around positionality within the travellers and the local community (Punch, 2012).

Participant selection utilised both convenience and purposive sampling. In order to identify backpackers, respondents were approached in budget accommodation and restaurants, or based on self-identification as backpackers. Some participants were approached specifically due to their nationality, as one purpose of the research was to explore different groups of consumers, i.e. Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers. Business owners and entrepreneurs were pre-selected, using purposive and snowball sampling, according to their business seemingly catering primarily to backpackers. The interviews with governmental actors were pre-arranged via e-mail and through personal contacts of some tourism businesses.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide based on the conceptual framework (Appendix 2: tables 1, 2 and 3). The questions covered themes related to the tourism actors' social, cultural and political embeddedness, as well as the drivers of tourism development, and aimed to capture any differences of perspectives

between the three types of tourism actors. The respondents were asked, for example, how they experienced tourism development in the community, why they chose to participate in backpacker tourism, and which social networks they were part of. Since our research assesses the power structures within the studied community, we were further interested in how tourism businesses were set up, how they operate, and by whom.

The interviews lasted between 18 minutes and up to three hours (with interruptions) for the backpackers, between 23 minutes and 1 hour 24 minutes for the businesses, and 37 minutes and 48 minutes respectively for the interviews with the policy makers. Most of the interviews were digitally recorded, subject to consent (n=4 were not recorded), and then transcribed. The interviews transcripts and supporting data were translated into English. The data was organised according to case study location and according to pre-determined themes derived from the conceptual framework that were included in the interview guidelines to ensure reliability of data. Then additional key themes arose from the data out of then interview responses and supporting data. No software was used to organise the data apart from Excel tables to provide overviews of statistical data, and the data was manually coded, as Saldaña (2015) notes this gives more control and ownership of the data analysis, and keeps the data within context. The respondents were defined by type of tourism actor, their origin (local, Colombian, foreign – for the backpackers Latin American or non-Latin American), their age group, and gender (Appendix 1: tables 1 and 2). The themes were also cross-case analysed across the different cases as well as the different types of data.

To ensure validity of the data provided by the research participants supporting evidence was used such as similar accounts from other participants and data triangulation through other sources of data in form of field diaries, newspaper articles and policy documents.

4.2 Context

Due to its recent history, Colombia has only (re)developed as an international tourism destination since the early 2000s. Before that, the civil war impeded tourism due to the security situation, with paramilitary, military and guerrilla groups fighting each other and kidnapping Colombians and foreigners for ransom payments. However, since 2010 Columbia's security situation has improved with guerrilla and paramilitary groups only active in remote parts of the country. Peace talks with the *Fuerzas Armadas*

Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the main guerrilla group, started in 2012 and a peace agreement was signed in 2016 (Brodzinsky, 2016). This has led to tourism developing for both domestic and international travellers (Steiner & Vallejo, 2010), including backpackers.

Colombia therefore is an appropriate case study context, as different kinds of tourism are developing in parallel instead of sequentially, as proposed by Butler's (1980) model. Along with backpacker tourism, cruise tourism on the Caribbean coast as well as other forms of mass tourism have developed in certain parts of the country (ProColombia, 2017). Colombia's geographical location, linking Central and South America, means that it has been incorporated into the popular backpacker travel route often called the 'Gringo Trail' (Hampton, 2013). Given the unique historical context and the limited research on backpacker tourism in Colombia, this setting was selected to assess power relations between the different tourism actors for small-scale tourism in a developing country.

Salento, the case study location, is a small town of about 7,000 inhabitants (DANE, 2005) in the Andes mountains that is located in the middle of the so-called *eje cafetero* (translation: 'coffee triangle'), the coffee-growing region in the Colombian highlands. Since the mid-2000s, backpacker tourism has developed in Salento, and there is a thriving industry around this style of travel. The main income generator is agriculture, especially producing coffee, and then followed by tourism (noted by Salento Town Hall). Backpacker tourism also somewhat bridges those two main industries, as described below.

5 Findings: Explorations of tourism actors' embeddedness in Salento, Colombia

This research aimed to study consumption and production simultaneously, so we structure the findings following Mosedale's (2011) approach of social, cultural and political embeddedness. Within in each section we present the complex power relations between the various consumer groups (Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers) and producer groups (local, national and international tourism businesses), and the governmental actors. We begin by outlining the drivers of backpacker tourism development bin the research setting.

5.1 Backpacker tourism development in Salento

Salento has been an emerging tourism destination among domestic tourists since about the year 2000. Before the early 2000s, there was little tourism due to the lack of a suitable infrastructure. Furthermore, the nearby Cocora Valley, one of the region's main attractions with it iconic wax palms, was focussed on agriculture, and there were few tourism businesses in the town. Also, with guerrilla activity in the area until about 2002, the security situation prevented tourism development. The situation has improved greatly since then with significant effort from the police and the armed forces (Chaparro Mendivelso & Santana Rivas, 2011).

As there is no official data on the number of tourists visiting Salento, let alone the backpacker segment, the development of backpacker tourism can be best traced using the opening of businesses catering to international independent travellers as a proxy. In Salento, domestic tourism developed slowly in the 1990s; but in the early 2000s, there was a more accelerated development according to respondents. More accommodation opened, ranging from family-run, rustic accommodation to two boutique hotels that opened since 2010. Therefore, Salento had already developed into a fairly popular domestic tourism resort, especially for day trips and long weekends, before international backpackers arrived. Backpacker tourism was initiated in 2004 by outsiders as a British man and his Colombian wife opened the first hostel in Salento with just five rooms:

> *"Between [my wife] and me, we pretty much dragged, kicking and screaming, Salento on the gringo trail… When we started, there was like one foreign backpacker a month, no, one every three months coming through Salento. In the first year [of opening our hostel], we averaged 2 people per night."* (Interview #22)

Following the opening of the first hostel and its subsequent success after being listed in the *Lonely Planet* guide book, some locals opened hostels, as well as other foreigners opening businesses for international tourists. In 2007 and 2008, two coffee farms in the area started guided tours which proved popular with tourists and are now offered by four farms in the area, commodifying the region's agricultural heritage as a tourism product. Then, from 2009 onwards there was an accelerated development of

backpacker tourism businesses run by foreigners, Colombians and locals. By 2015, three of the coffee farms provided tours also in English, responding to increasing numbers of international, non-Spanish-speaking tourists.

Although local business owners did not have travel experience as backpackers themselves, and thus lacked the knowledge power of the foreign business owners who had been backpackers, one local couple acquired knowledge indirectly through their guests. This indicates that local entrepreneurs are not necessarily excluded from gaining knowledge power.

Following the rise of backpacker accommodation, from around 2011, more tailored services were offered to backpackers. More recently, two further trends can be identified in Salento's development of backpacker tourism, namely up-scaling and diversification. Firstly, in late 2014 a foreign-run restaurant aimed at international backpackers opened, offering a more refined menu:

> *". . . to provide 100% home cooked and natural food to backpackers. As we have travelled extensively ourselves, the motto could be 'From backpackers for backpackers'. [...] And here in Salento the choice of food is very limited. [...] I also want to encourage other people to be more creative in the kitchen with their food. [...] We source as much as we can locally... It is a way to work with the local people, to help the community, and to be part of it. So I use Colombian ingredients for European cooking. [...] I would say about 98% of our customers are foreigners, and 2% are Colombians, but that are rather local Colombians and friends. But our customers do not travel on a shoestring, they are more the flashpackers."* (Interview #25)

However, this approach also showed that the foreign business owners want to be socially and culturally embedded into the community, even enriching them, supporting Brenner and Fricke's (2016) findings on lifestyle entrepreneurs in backpacker tourism in Mexico. The upscaling trend is mainly driven by foreign business owners who possess the knowledge power due to their own travel experiences and can translate it into more refined products. The demand for upscale services was also driven by consumers, in particular by the more mature backpackers who expected, for example, more comfortable accommodation. This development is similar to what Peele and Steen (2012) described in Australia, where the market also shifted to more professionally run, resort-style backpacker accommodation.

A second trend was business diversification of established backpacker tourism companies that identified gaps in the market. Evidence of this could be found by backpacker restaurants offering accommodation, activity providers offering accommodation, restaurants offering activities such as coffee tours, or accommodation providers offering tours into the surrounding area or services such as airport transfers. One underlying motivation of this diversification was also to increase the backpackers' length of stay by offering a greater variety of activities.

The diversification trend was spread across all groups of business owners, not just the foreign ones as with the upscaling trend. Some of the businesses had the diversification in their long-term business plan (e.g. interview #21), others appeared to take on the opportunities when they arose (e.g. interview #16). The development seemed to balance some of the unequal knowledge power possessed by the foreign business owners, as the Colombian and local owners could acquire knowledge through observing successful businesses.

5.2 Explorations of tourism actors' social embeddedness

The findings showed that the social embeddedness affects the power relations between the three tourism actors. The backpackers emphasised the importance of socialising for travel-related information exchange, which at the same time enhanced their knowledge power. This illustrates that networking between backpackers was a significant part of decision-making, and also might have economic implications for backpacker businesses at current and future destinations.

In addition to speaking to other backpackers in hostels, restaurants and during activities like hiking, respondents also used guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet*, websites and blogs, as well as booking/rating websites such as *TripAdvisor* in their choices for accommodation, food, activities etc. Although some respondents used a guidebook as an addition, travellers mostly relied on online information, both before and during their trip because of the wider reach and the recentness. Almost all interviewed backpackers used *TripAdvisor.* This seems to indicate a shift in the previous influence of guidebooks over destinations or tourism providers. Where it seemed that, for example, the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks would put backpacker destinations 'on the map' (e.g. Sørensen, 2003), more recently the knowledge power and knowledge sharing has shifted back to the backpackers through online platforms such as TripAdvisor and other user-generated content (Mendes-Filho et al., 2010).

Overall, socialising, and hence the social embeddedness within the backpacker community, played an important role in the backpacker experience, for spending time with people from other parts of the world, and to exchange useful recommendations. Reichenberger (2016) also emphasised the importance of social interaction with other backpackers, as it would provide a social support system for long-term travellers being away from friends and family.

However, one Canadian backpacker also reflected more critically on socialising: *"You kind of stay in this backpacker bubble; you spend more time with backpackers than with locals. I guess it makes it easier, just staying in your comfort zone."* (Interview #12)

This reinforces what Hottola (2008) calls 'safe havens' for the travellers that also allow them to 'check-out' of a destination while still being there and be separate from the 'reality' of the host community. Staying within their 'bubble' does not help address the issue of unequal global and local tourism development (Scheyvens, 2002).

Once the travellers left their 'bubble' though, the interviewed backpackers all felt welcomed in Salento and had no complaints over hospitality or friendliness of local people, but rather praised them as very hospitable. However, we found an indication that there might be a difference in how the Latin American backpackers were treated in comparison to backpackers from other parts of the world, as two friends travelling together, one from Europe, the other from Latin America, commented:

(Researcher: *"Do you think it makes a difference that you are Latin American, travelling here in Latin America?"*)

Latin American Interviewee: *"I think it's easier to get in contact with people as a native speaker [of Spanish]. Not many people speak English here. But they don't mind if you are speaking in English; they are used to it."*

(Researcher: *"Do you think though it makes a difference that you are latina? Do you think they treat you differently?"*)

Latin American Interviewee: [shakes her head]

European Interviewee: *"Yes, yes! I can tell you. They do. In the way how they look at you. They cannot take advantage of her, because she is not stupid, she is not a tourist, she looks local."* [Turning to their friend] *"Because you do look local."* [Latin American interviewee nods their head] *"I don't, you don't as well . . . So yeah, you feel safer at some points."* (Interview #9)

As this illustrates, locals treated Latin American backpackers differently, as they were not able to assess if the travellers were Colombians or from other parts of the continent. This affected informal pricing, for example for street food, or when asking for travel hints, and equipped the Latin American travellers with more bargaining power than their non-Latin American counterparts. Interestingly, none of the Latin American backpackers were aware of the possible different treatment; it was only pointed out by this European backpacker travelling with their Latin American friend, and provides scope for further investigation.

Due to their shared language, the interviewed Latin American backpackers possessed superior knowledge power when socialising with the locals. English seemed to be little spoken, especially by the locals. A Canadian backpacker with little Spanish knowledge complained about the tourism office employees not speaking English; if they did, it would make communication and thus knowledge sharing much easier. (This, of course, is reciprocal: if the backpackers spoke Spanish, it would make communication easier with locals.)

However, socialising with locals was mostly restricted to business transactions or for information exchange. This is somewhat surprising as backpackers often claim that cultural exchange is one of their most important motivations for travelling (Paris & Teye 2010). This cultural exchange seemed to be mostly happening with other travellers, but less so with locals. Aziz (1999) also observed that most interaction was limited to transactions in his studies on backpackers in Egypt. They therefore seemed to primarily stay within their backpacker 'bubble', and their social embeddedness was strongest amongst themselves.

Regarding the social embeddedness of the businesses, we found that the running of illegal businesses led to some social tensions within the community:

> *"There is more tourism here now, but it is less controlled . . . . it is not nice any more to do business. The government is now introducing new laws, standards and certifications for tourism. But for every legal hostel in town there are three illegal, and the government doesn't do anything about that. Those illegal hostels take business away from the legal ones who pay tax."* (Interview #22)

Representatives from the region's Chamber of Commerce, when interviewed about the illegal businesses and the lack of enforcement against them, responded that

they did not have the power to prosecute illegal businesses; that was the tourism police's remit. Another Colombian hostel owner angrily noted illegal businesses operated relatively unchallenged, because the tourism police only checked registered businesses. This sentiment was supported by another Colombian business owner: "*the laws are made for the legal businesses, not for the illegal ones; the more legal you are, the more problems you will have*". (Interview #18)

However, illegal businesses could also serve to explore new or innovative tourism products that are not offered elsewhere in Salento as one Colombian respondent offered activities to international backpackers on a semi-regular basis. They confessed that they did not have the financial power at this moment to register their business, especially since they did not offer activities regularly enough to provide a steady income. Even though illegal, the activity could increase the attractiveness of Salento and extend the tourists' length of stay and therefore expenditure. The importance of informal businesses to innovation, especially in a developing country context, has been noted (Cozzens and Sutz, 2014), but could possibly be further explored in the backpacker tourism setting. This also an example of the market knowledge of business owners. Because of their travel experience, all foreign business owners possessed knowledge about backpacking. The majority of the Colombians had not travelled themselves, but possessed a different kind of knowledge power which derived from local circumstances, such as their knowledge of local territory or their background of agriculture that they turned into a tourism business.

Businesses within the community were working together using three different models: a commission basis, based on kin or friendship, and based on a social approach. Businesses working together on a commission basis placed little emphasis on social, but more on the financial advantage. This suggests that some businesses in the community may exert more financial and bargaining power over how much they can pay other businesses in commissions. This, in turn, can again be a reproduction of the community's existing social inequalities, as the payment of higher commissions may benefit already successful businesses and therefore financially well off or stable business owners, whereas it may disadvantage businesses with low financial capital.

Recommendations based on family connections seemed to be common in a tourism setting, especially in small communities. This social embeddedness of local businesses seemed stronger than for business owners from outside the community who lack the social ties. This may thus contribute to the re-production of inequalities in the

community, as the social power could stay within certain groups, potentially leading to nepotism.

Nevertheless, business owners from outside the town, especially the foreign business owners, addressed this lack of social embeddedness within the community by creating close friendship groups. Within these friendship groups there was a strong exchange of backpacker tourism specific knowledge and skills, which meant that also social and knowledge power remained within that group. It could also be argued that the tacit knowledge that comes from the backpacker experience itself is harder to transfer to business owners without the travel experience (Polanyi, 1983). However, Hoarau (2014) highlights that frequent interpersonal interactions between the knowledge holder and the ones who lack it could improve the absorptive capacity, particularly in small tourism enterprises. This lack of sharing with locals can be seen as the reproduction of general global inequalities of knowledge and skills due to unequal access to travel. This also led to some resentment by the local tourism owners, and to tension in the community. That said, as Hoarau (2014) suggested, many of the foreign business owners tried to share their knowledge and skills with their local staff, such as through teaching them English, but with varying success.

However, some more pro-active Colombian business owners did gain knowledge through absorptive capacity. This means that through the tourism businesses run by the foreigners and as well as through their guests the local businesses may be able to acquire some of the skills that the foreign business owners possess. This supports Hampton's findings (2013, 1998) where fishing families in Indonesia were able to acquire knowledge from the backpackers while running backpacker tourism businesses such as beach hut accommodation.

Foreign and Colombian business owners could also be differentiated by their approach to business. Many foreign and a few Colombian business owners in Salento were 'lifestyle entrepreneurs', as defined by Brenner and Fricke (2016), whose objective was not necessarily profit, but more the living of a backpacking type lifestyle similar to their customers. In addition, the entrepreneurs did not aim for financial success, but rather wanted to share and spread wealth throughout the community through non-commission based recommendations and local employment. This generosity may be explained through their advantageous financial position, as all bar one of the foreign business owners admitted to having additional income sources in their home countries. For others, Colombia's lower costs of living also meant they could

earn less while achieving a similar standard of living to their home countries. The strong financial background provided the foreigners with an advantage over local business owners. This put the local tourism-dependent businesses in a more precarious situation during low season or times of lower demand. The foreign lifestyle entrepreneurs could balance these fluctuations with other income, or could move to their home countries: their financial power allowed them to do so.

However, as noted above, lifestyle entrepreneurs placed more emphasis on sharing the tourism income within the community, adopting a more social approach to working with other business owners. Such an approach helps addressing the inequalities within the local community. They usually only offered limited services to allow other businesses to benefit and therefore the income generated by tourism would spread throughout the community.

Other foreign and Colombian business owners, about half of the interviewed businesses, however, seemed to be profit maximising, aiming to provide as many services as possible, including accommodation, food, drinks and tours, similar to a conventional tourism resort (see Peele and Steen, 2012). This also supports the idea of backpacker hostel as 'safe havens' as noted earlier, as the backpackers have little need to leave the hostel as all their needs are met. It could not be established, however, if this trend is demand or supply driven. The profit-driven full service provision also means that less tourism income is spread throughout the community as the businesses do not necessarily work together to create a tourism product for the backpackers involving more than one or two businesses. This could then lead to more tensions in the community as some entrepreneurs might be perceived as being selfish for not sharing the tourism income, which subsequently reinforces power inequalities already existent in the community.

Strong social embeddedness within a community can also influence political action (Zukin & DiMaggio 1990). The community round table ('*mesa ciudadana*') in Salento is an example of this. However, caution is needed concerning the power structures underlying this action, because of socially dominant individuals or groups in the community. This in turn, can reinforce existing inequalities within the community instead of diminishing them.

At the time of research, no foreign business owner was active at the community round table, yet for different reasons. One the one hand, we found that the foreign entrepreneurs' were reluctant to get involved in the local collective political action

which could originate from the fact that they might not be as invested in the local community as the locals and Colombians. The reasons might be manifold, such as the perceived limited focus (on international tourism) and effectiveness of discussions, or even the opportunity to return to their home countries.

On the other hand, we also found evidence that foreigners did want to get involved but due to the lack of their limited social embeddedness were not able to do so.

The locals, however, might be more inclined to invest their time into collective action as the community is their permanent home with limited options to move. Hence, the tension between foreign and Colombian business owners could be intensified by this sentiment of 'opting out'. Cultural differences between the actors might also be adding to this, which are explained in the following section.

5.3 Explorations of tourism actors' cultural embeddedness

When examining cultural embeddedness, the close link between tourism consumption and production became apparent. As for being culturally embedded into the host community, local and international cuisine seemed to be an important aspect for the travellers who were surprised by the variety on offer. While some travellers wanted to try the local cuisine, a Canadian backpacker who had been in South America for four months was happy to find international food. Further, some upscale restaurants in town offering European-Colombian fusion food were popular with European and Latin American backpackers alike. These findings indicate some cultural convergence that could be explored in further research, possibly using Mak, Lumbers and Eves' (2012) framework of the 'glocalisation' and diversification in tourists' food consumption, and who found that tourism can both reconstruct and reinvent local cuisine. Regarding gastronomy available, the findings show the business owners who had travelled had the knowledge about more international cuisines, and thus could charge premium prices.

The main cultural assets for the backpackers were the landscape and the traditional coffee farms. The majority of the interviewed backpackers participated in a guided tour of a farm, making it the second most popular activity after hiking in the Cocora Valley:

> *"I really wanted to come to the coffee zone, because of the nature, but also because of the coffee. We did the coffee tour on the farm here, and I loved it. I work with coffee [in the country where I live], and I wanted to see how it is*

grown and learn more about it. The tour was my favourite part of the stay in Salento." (Interview #9)

Interestingly, a group of three Chilean backpackers, staying at a foreign-run hostel with its adjacent coffee farm, preferred to go to a coffee tour on the outskirts of the town, run by a Colombian, because of the many cultural intricacies that would be lost in translation if they attended an English speaking tour. This indicates possible cultural differences or preferences for certain activities for Latin American backpackers. Because of the shared language there was a different level of cultural embeddedness of the Latin American travellers into the host community. This may be an area where the locals can exert more (knowledge) power over the foreign business owners, especially when developing products geared at Spanish-speakers.

As for the local community, some local business owners indicated that they felt like they were losing their authenticity, and their sense of being *salentinos* due to tourism and the influx of outsiders into their town. One business owner explained: *"Unfortunately, people are moving away. They can sell their house for a good price here, and buy a house cheaper in a village nearby."* (Interview #16). Another shared the sentiment, saying that with the sale of the houses to foreigners and to pensioners from the big cities of Colombia, there would be a lack of control of the sales, which ultimately would lead to *"losing our culture, architecture and traditions."* (Interview #14)

However, tourism also offered possibilities to preserve some of their cultural heritage by commodifying it as in the case of the coffee farms, making use of their power of practice based and context-specific local knowledge (Yanow, 2004), which as a result provided an additional source of income to agriculture.

5.4 Explorations of tourism actors' political embeddedness

Millar and Aiken (1995: 629) pointed out that communities are "as much driven by grievances, prejudices, inequalities and struggles for power as they are united by kinship reciprocity and interdependence" ; therefore, local decision-making would often be personal. This became particularly apparent when analysing the level of political embeddedness of local businesses and policy makers, which was mainly expressed through the town's round table, the "*mesa ciudadana*". It was initiated by two local tourism entrepreneurs working mostly in domestic tourism. It was open to all to

participate in, and included officials from the Town Hall since most meetings addressed citizens' concerns and informed about changes to legislation. Not only could locals, entrepreneurs or people who moved to the town voice their concerns, the round table also started initiatives within the town. Tourism related initiatives referred, for example, to the engagement of young locals with tourism, which has the potential to address some of the inequalities in terms of knowledge and skills existent in the community.

It also enabled the co-operation between the Town Hall and locals when planning campaigns or events, such as the forum called "*Turismo si, pero no asi*" (translation: "Tourism yes, but not like this") which was held in 2014 in cooperation of the Town Hall, the Chamber of Commerce and the town's round table with the aim to provide solutions and plans on how to address tourism development (Cámara de Comercio de Armenia y del Quindío, 2014). Even though these initiatives ensured the political embeddedness of the policy makers and the local community, whether any of the results had been translated into actual legislation or actions, remains questionable.

Yet overall, there were only a few backpacker tourism businesses involved in the round table, and no foreigner business owners participated due to a perceived lack of action. This was confirmed by a local respondent:

> "*I am not a member of the association. I don't think it can work. At the end of the day, we are all competitors. And people never have the same opinion, so there are always discussions and fights. So for me that is just a waste of time.*"
> (Interview #24)

Some of the foreign business owners were generally unhappy with the representation in the Town Hall. They bemoaned that the same clique, who apparently had gone to private school together in the nearby city of Armenia, had ruled Salento for a few decades and would often act rather in their own business than in the town's interest. They felt that the legislation related to tourism was skewed towards domestic tourism provided by locals, rather than focussing on issues of the international backpacker tourism. As one European business owner commented: "*As a foreigner you have no political voice here*". This lack of political embeddedness has the potential to reinforce the inequalities existent in the community. This could provide a problem, as all foreigners were involved in generating income from international backpacker tourism, and much less in domestic tourism.

At local governmental level, tourism development was supported by the sub-secretary for culture, sports and tourism as part of the Town Hall. Even though a tourism plan existed (Alcaldía de Salento, 2013), the Town Hall representative said "*the plan is very complete, it just needs reactivation*". However, our analysis revealed it lacking concrete actions in order to address the issues raised. The plan did not distinguish between domestic and international tourism either, and might therefore not have the appropriate measures in place to address the distinct issues created by both forms of tourism. That was somewhat surprising as the Town Hall representative argued that backpackers were an important market segment. However, it could be in line with findings of Reed's (1997) study on tourism planning and power in a community in Canada, where the tourism development plan was viewed by officials to be taken forward by the private sector on a project base, instead of allocating funds to realise the plan.

One of the issues identified in our research was the lack of information provided to tourists by the Town Hall. Tourists could not rely on the tourist information booth which was often un-staffed even during the busiest time of the year. When visited by the lead author, the staff of the tourist information booth only recommended local businesses, they did not mention or recommend any foreign-owned businesses. This may indicate that the official tourist information was not impartial and discriminated against the foreign-owned businesses, probably due to social networks and local family ties of the staff, as also indicated by some respondents. This indicates a strong link of social and political embeddedness. The unequal knowledge power of local staff may also be a reason why the interviewed backpackers rather relied on information given by other travellers than official knowledge sources.

The regional Chamber of Commerce, even though not a direct government institution, was also involved in tourism development in the town. During fieldwork, they were promoting a campaign to acquire a sustainable tourism certification, offering support to achieve the standards of the certificate. The sustainable tourism certification was a countrywide measure, initiated by the national government and implemented through their regional and local administrative arms. The involvement of the regional government appeared to be crucial to implement sustainability measures that also affected the backpacker tourism businesses.

However, there is little or unclear regulation on other issues, such as the ownership structure of the Cocora Valley, the region's main tourist attraction. Although

it has been a protected area since 1985 (El Heraldo, 2014), the valley land was private with four families mostly using it for cattle farming (which had a negative effect on the regeneration of the wax palm), and complicated the process of enforcing protective tourism regulations.

The national government also had an ambivalent relationship towards tourism development in this area, as it promoted the Cocora Valley as one of their touristic assets in their publicity (ProColombia, 2017), but also pursued the possibility of gold mining in this area. The exact situation seemed a little unclear whether or not actual titles for mining rights have been given to a mining TNC (El Tiempo, 2016). However, the citizens of Salento were alerted and unhappy with this development, and organised petitions and marches. The activism against the mining seemed to be led by the town's round table and the Town Hall, who seemed to fear not only for the touristic value of the region, but also for their water supply from the area.

The interests of the local, regional and national government seemed to clash at times, instead of being harmonised, and might result in a political power play whereby the national government will dominate. This might lead to conflict and uncertainty, which might also influence the tourism development of the town. This is not uncommon in tourism planning, as Healy et al. (2012) found in their Irish study that top-down decision-making based on short-term goals instead of joint-up thinking and meaningful public participation would lead to conflict over development projects regarding tourism and beyond. Instead, a co-management model based on balance between local and national governments to avoid decision-making on political agendas could be more successful (Healy et al. 2012).

6 Discussion and Conclusion

Our research aimed to investigate the complex relationship of tourism development and the power relations between the three tourism actors. It also examined how social, cultural and political embeddedness of these actors influence the power relations between them.

Overall, we found that pre-existing power relations between the three actors, in terms of knowledge, financial, bargaining and social power, influenced the tourism development in the community. In turn, the development of tourism did not significantly improve existing power relations. We found that power relations and levels of embeddedness were strongly related. The results show that all actors were heavily

socially embedded, but mainly within their own groups. For example, the backpackers stayed in their 'safe havens' (Sørensen, 2003), and had little engagement with the local community. The same was found for foreign businesses and their interaction with local businesses. Thus, strong social power existed, but mainly within each group, but weak between groups. The lack of interaction between those groups - beyond the necessary interactions - limited the balancing of power.

As a result of this social embeddedness, knowledge power was mostly also retained within groups. While foreign business owners had extensive personal knowledge of backpacker travelling, local owners possessed local market knowledge which was also influenced by their level of cultural embeddedness. On the consumption side, the Latin American backpackers possessed higher bargaining power in comparison with their non-Latin American counterparts due to their cultural embeddedness related to knowledge of shared language and culture.

Financial power seemed to be more balanced amongst the producer groups. Although foreigners were privileged through their financial background, some locals increased their financial power through employment and knowledge transfer (on an individual basis), in particular, being encouraged by foreign lifestyle entrepreneurs. However, locals who did not benefit from knowledge transfer could be even further marginalised (Brenner and Fricke 2007).

The level of social and cultural embeddedness also seemed to determine the level of political embeddedness within Salento. We found that the foreign entrepreneurs' weak political embeddedness was not only due to their choice but also because of prevalent social, cultural and institutional structures. Interestingly, the strong financial power of some actors did not imply strong political power, as indicated by Hall (2006).

The limited effect of tourism development on existing power relations is somewhat surprising, especially in the context of backpacker tourism, as other studies such as Hampton (1998, 2003) and Scheyvens (2002) found that small-scale tourism development elsewhere typically enabled groups with lower financial and social power to participate in tourism and improve their often precarious economic situation. Instead, our findings reinforced Mosedale's (2011) questioning if alternative forms of tourism, such as backpacker tourism, simply reproduce dominant power relations instead of addressing them.

The key contribution of this paper is the conceptual framework that explores how embeddedness and power relations between the three actors of tourism development influence, and are influenced by, small-scale, backpacker tourism development, and what drives this development. It includes three actors of tourism development: the producers (the tourism SMEs); the consumers (backpackers); and the governmental actors shaping the political environment. The framework of this article developed the notion of linkage between consumption and production while also anchoring the actors in their social, cultural and political embeddedness.

Combining two existing notions from Ferguson (2011) and Mosedale (2011) allowed a new framework to be holistic in its analysis, incorporating various aspects of tourism development instead of focussing on one single aspect. It first addressed the dominant dichotomy of analysing either the production or the consumption side in most tourism studies as pointed out by Ateljevic (2000). Furthermore, it combined a variety of voices by including different actors of tourism development from different national backgrounds. By including all main actors and types of embeddedness, it allowed for a more accurate analysis of the processes and implicit power relations relevant to backpacker tourism development.

The main strength of the framework is the explicit revealing of power relationships between actors, thus creating more awareness about their impact on tourism development. The developed framework allows for adaptability to specific context by varying the actors involved, and existing power relations and the types of embeddedness. For this study, the initial framework was enhanced based on the findings from fieldwork. In addition, secondary actors who also influence tourism development were added such as domestic tourists, illegal businesses as well as agriculture. The context-specific differences of this research are reflected in the final framework (Figure 2).

Finally, the framework also provides the possibility of application to different geographical locations, and to other small-scale tourism settings such as eco-tourism. It can therefore contribute to a better understanding of the tensions and power relations of (small-scale) tourism development at the local scale.

The findings of this study have important implications for the actors involved in tourism development. Local policy makers will be able to better understand power relations and thus purposefully engage with all actors in addressing inequalities. As was

shown, foreign business owners mainly possessed knowledge power, but lacked social and cultural embeddedness. Hence, we recommend that policy makers address these imbalances and encourage the exchange of knowledge in return for social and cultural insights. We argue that equalising power relations would then result in increased political embeddedness of previously marginalised actors.

Nunkoo and Smith's (2013) findings suggest that the political support for tourism is positively related to the communities' perception of the benefits of tourism. Thus, clear communication of the benefits of tourism development in comparison with their costs may secure support and engagement of all actors, including foreign business owners (Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). With their support, the local policy makers will be able to address more effectively the tensions arising from tourism development. Furthermore, tourism initiatives should take into consideration the different needs of domestic and international tourists and address them accordingly.

Entrepreneurs – especially foreign ones – should not underestimate the value of political embeddedness and should engage better with the other tourism actors, including policy makers. Businesses should pay attention to the latest tourism trends such as upscaling and diversification, so that they can tailor their offering to the changing needs of backpackers.

7 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study has some limitations. One constraint of the study was that a relatively small number of interviews with governmental policy makers were conducted, despite several attempts over a long period. Therefore, the analysis of the political embeddedness was mainly based on the perception of the tourism businesses and on policy documents. For future studies, policy makers from the regional and possibly national government and non-governmental bodies could be involved.

Although this study refers to backpackers broadly as tourism consumers, backpackers are not a homogenous group (Hampton, 2013, Dayour et al., 2017). They have different expectations, travel and spending patterns, and thus form different market segments with different needs regarding product development and policy support. Even though our study differentiated between Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers, it was unable to make sufficient distinction between different travel styles, for example long-term versus short-term backpacking. It would therefore be useful to

take a more differentiated look at backpacker tourism, also in the light of the up-scale shift in the market identified in our study.

Due to the context-specific nature of the study, further research is needed in different temporal and contextual settings. To address the question of the limited influence of tourism development on power relations, we would encourage research exploring the relevance of the context in terms of social, cultural and political embeddedness of the main actors in different geographical, as well as in established and newer small-scale tourism destinations. Further research may also validate and enhance the proposed theoretical framework for other types of small scale tourism settings such as eco-tourism for example. Additionally, comparative research between tourism destinations may unveil contrasting dynamics between tourism development and power relations between the three main actors within the backpacker tourism sector. Finally, revisiting the findings of this study through a follow up fieldwork may add a longitudinal dimension to this analysis and will contribute to further validating and enhancing our conceptual framework.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Overview Interviews Salento

Table 1: Backpacker interviews

Interview #	Nationality	Age	Gender
#1	Mexican	26-35	female
	French	26-35	female
#2	Argentinian	26-35	female
#3	English	26-35	female
	New Zealand	26-35	male
#4	Slovakian	18-25	male
	Slovakian	18-25	female
#5	Russian	26-35	female
#6	Danish	18-25	female
#7	German	26-35	female
	Indonesian	26-35	male
	Italian	26-35	male
#8	German	26-35	female
#9	Italian	36-45	female
	Venezuelan	26-35	female
#10	Argentinian	36-45	male
	Argentinian	36-45	female
#11	Australian	18-25	female

#12	Scottish	18-25	male
	Canadian	18-25	male
#13	French	18-25	male

Table 2: Business Interviews

Interview #	Type of Business	From where	Age	Gender
#14	Hostel	local	36-45	female, male
#15	Hostel	regional	46-55	female
#16	Restaurant, activity agency	Colombia	26-35; 55+	female, male
#17	Restaurant	Colombia	26-35	female, male
#18	Activity	Colombia	26-35	female
#19	Activity	Colombia	26-35	male
#20	Restaurant	North America	46-55	male
#21	Activity	Europe, Colombia	36-45	male, male
#22	Hostel	Europe, Colombia	46-55	male, female
#23	Hostel	North America	36-45	male, male
#24	Hostel	local	36-45	male
#25	Restaurant	Europe, North America	46-55	female, male

| #26 | Hostel | North America | 36-45 | male |

Table 3: Governmental actors

interviews

| #27 | Governmental Actor | regional | | male, female |
| #28 | Governmental Actor | local | | male |

Appendix 2 – Interview Guidelines

Table 1: Interview Guideline Backpacker

Topic	**Questions**	**Embeddedness**
1 Statistics	female male other Age range under 18 18-25 26-30 31-40 41-50 over 50 Country of Nationality Occupation	

	Level of Education	
	Would you consider yourself an experienced backpacker? (1st trip or not; where already travelled to?)	
2 Mapping	Would you please draw your (intended) travel rout in Colombia into the map. Include the amount of time you (intend on) staying in one place. How long is your trip in Colombia? How long is your entire trip (if travelling multiple countries)? Are you travelling alone or with somebody else? If with somebody else, please specify (relationship, nationality).	Social
3 Accessibility	1 Is this your first time in Colombia? 1.1 If no, why did you return? 2 How did you get here (plane, overland bus, sailing)? Why?	Political

| | 3 Was it easy or difficult to get to Colombia? E.g. change of planes, exhausting overland travel with long waits at the boarders etc.

4 Are travelling independently or with a tour? Why?

4.1 What is your main mode of transport? Why? | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 Country Image | 1 What made you decide on Colombia as a destination? What and where did you hear about it?

2 What influences you most when you decide(ed) where you are travelling to within Colombia?
How did/do you plan your trip, what sources are you using? Why?
(guidebook, blogs, videos, friends/family, fellow travellers etc.)

2.1 From what you have seen and done, have your impressions of the village been full-filled? Why or why not? | Social and Political

Social and Political

Social and Political |

	2.2 Were the impressions given in the guidebooks/blogs/by friends etc. full-filled, or did you have differing experiences? Can you explain a little.	
5 Consumption	1.1 When looking for accommodation, how do you usually proceed? (pre-book online, walk around upon arrival looking at hostels etc.) 1.2 Has this changed over your trip? Why? 2 What kind of accommodation are you staying in at the moment? (tent, hammock, dorm, size of dorm, double/private) Why? 3 How are you feeding yourself? Restaurants, self-catering? Why? 4.1 What have you spend the most time doing here? 4.2 What was your most memorable/worst activity here? Hostel restaurants/cafés bars/clubs diving horseback-	Social and Cultural Social and Cultural

	riding Coffee/cacao farm hiking (organized/self-organized) tour operator taxis internet café boat lease/tour other: 5 How do you decide which activities to participate in while at a destination? Where do you get the information about these activities? 5.1 Did you plan these activities by yourself or through a tour company/agent? 6 What do you think of the tourism/backpacker infrastructure? Did you find everything you need here? 6.1 Would you require additional services or could you think of products/activities, they should offer? 7 What do you think of the prices here such as accommodation and food? 7.1 Do you haggle?	Social and Cultural

	7.1.1 On which things? Why	
	7.1.2 Has this changed over your trip?	
6 Community	1 How do you feel tourists are made welcome in this village?	Social and Cultural
	2.1 Did you have to chance to socialise with locals?	
	2.1.1 If yes, can you tell me about it? If not, why not?	Social and Cultural
	2.2 Would you like more contact with locals? (check for language barrier, possible hostility or cultural differences)	
	2.3 For Latin American backpacker: How has your experience been getting in contact or socialising with locals?	Social
	2.3.1 Has language made a difference in getting in contact?	Social and Cultural
	2.3.2 Do you think it makes a difference at all being a Latin American backpacker? ("Well, have you ever been offered a discount, for example?")	

	3 How much time do you spend with fellow travellers? Why or why not? 3.1 Did you known them before or did you meet them during the trip (e.g. in the hostel)? 3.2 Are they from your country or from somewhere else?	
7 Backpacker community	4 Are you using social media to during the trip to inform friends and family about your whereabouts and what you are up to? If so, which ones: Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube/Vimeo WhatsApp Blog Other: Why? 5 Are you also communicating with other travellers about your current trip, both offline and/or online? Why or why not? 5.1 If yes, how and where (e.g. Facebook groups, travel forums, notice boards)	Social

	6 If yes, what sort of things are you telling them about?	
8 Conclusion	1 How do you see this village developing in the next 5 to 10 years? Why?	

Table 2: Interview Guideline Businesses

Topic	Questions	Embeddedness
1 Statistics	female male other Age range under 18 18-25 26-35 36- 45 46-55 over 55 What kind of business? restaurant/café hostel dive shop tour company coffee/cacao farm internet café souvenir shop/seller boat tours other: Education level Ownership structure: sole family shared (local/regional/national/internat.)	
2 Business	1 Could you tell me a little about your business, when you set up, why and how it developed? 1.1 year of initiation of business	Social

	1.2 size of the business (e.g. hostel beds, number of seating in a restaurant) 1.3 possible business partners (nationalities?); If yes, why with partner? 1.4 How many employees do you have (full-time and part-time), resp. how many people are employed in the business? 1.5 Who is employed (family, from the village/area) ? → why and why not (e.g. preferably not employed from the region because of educational reasons; employment of family members because of trust issues) 2 Did you have previous experience in the tourism sector? Or did you run another business beforehand (if so, what kind)? 3 What motivated you to open the business? Where did you get the idea from? 4 Why did you chose to open this kind of business (e.g. as hostel), and not another one? 5 Did you ever travel as a backpacker yourself (esp. if hostel owner)? If so, where? 6 Why did you chose to open the business here, in this place, not somewhere else? Did you	Possibly Political Social Social Social Social Social and Cultural

	consider opening it somewhere else? If so, where, and why did you decide against it? 7 How did you start out? Did you have some money saved up or did you get a loan? 7.1 Or did you built the business one step at the time, when there were financial means? 8 Where do you source your products from (e.g. food stuff, furniture, building material, equipment)? Why? (cost, quality, easy of supply…)	
3 Consumers	1 What kind of backpackers are your usual customers (nationality, gender…)? 1.1 If mainly specific nationalities/gender, why is that? 2 What are the services they mostly ask you for (e.g. hostel: dorm rooms or privates; tour companies: most popular trips etc.)? Why could that be?	Social Social and Cultural

| | 3 Do backpackers ask for services that you do not provide? Do you recommend other businesses then?

3.1 If so, are those recommended businesses your family or friends' business?

3.2 Do you not offer or recommend businesses or services that you don't agree with (e.g. a bar that plays loud music all night and keeps the village awake)? Why?

4 How do you advertise your services? (homepage, guidebooks, business networks, flyers/brochures etc.)

4.1 What made you decide on these measures?

4.2 (If hostel) Which booking platforms are you a member of? Why these?

4.3 How do the backpackers usually buy your services? Online (pre-booking), via a tour company/operator or directly with you? | Social |
| 4 Community | 1 In your opinion, has the village changed in the last 10 years, especially in regards to tourism?

1.1 What are the main changes? | Cultural

Cultural |

	2 What are your views on these changes, how do you feel about them?	
	2.1 Have you discussed these views with others? (whom? Why or why not?)	
	2.2 Is that the prevailing view in the village?	Social & Cultural
	3 Have you discussed running a tourism business with your family? How do they feel about you running a tourism business?	
	3.1 Do other members of your family run tourism businesses in this community or nearby? Why or why not?	
	3.2 What do they do?	Social & Political
	4 Are you a member of a tourism association? Is there one in the village? Why or why not?	
	4.1 If yes, how is it organised?	
	4.2 If not, who represents your interests towards the local and regional government etc.?	
5 Government	1 Do you know how Colombia promotes the country to foreign tourists? (Note: maybe bring some brochures they can have a look at)	Cultural & Political

	1.1 Do you agree with the image that is created? Why or why not?	
	1.2 Do you believe it might be beneficial for your business? Why or why not?	Political
		Political and
	2 Are there any laws or regulations that make a big difference on your business, good or bad? What would you change about them if you could?	Social
	3 How is your relationship with the local or regional government, esp. in regards to tourism? 3.1 What would you improve?	
6 Conclusion	1 How do you see the village developing in the next 5 or 10 years? What are your plans and wishes for the future?	

Table 3: Interview Guideline Governmental Actors

Topic	Questions	Embeddedness
1 Statistics	female male other Age range under 18 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 over 55 What kind of organisation Education level	
2 Organization	For NGO: Could you tell me a little about your organization, when it was set up, how it developed and for which purpose? 1 Please tell me about your role in the organization, your responsibilities and your day-to-day work.	
3 Country Image	1 How are you promoting Colombia/the region/the village? Why?	Political

	2 Who are your main tourist target groups? Why?	
	3 What countries are your target markets? 3.1 Has this changed? If so, why?	Political, possibly cultural
	4 Do you actively promote backpacker tourism? 4.1 If yes, how? 4.2 If no, why not?	
4 Strategy	1 In some other countries backpackers are seen as an important market. How do you/your organisation see them? Why? 1.1 What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of backpacker tourism?	Political
	2 Do you have Latin American and international backpackers incorporated in your tourism strategy?	
	3 Do you recognize the backpacker segment as a contributor to your tourism income? 3.1 If yes, why is it not incorporated in the strategy?	

	4 Some parts of the country/region are especially popular with backpackers. Have you noticed a change in the tourism infrastructure there over the past years? How do you explain those changes?	Political and Social
	5 Have you noticed any other economic or social changes, e.g. the unemployment rate sank, a part of town got safer? Why?	
	6 When you make plans about the tourism future of the country/region/town, are the local community and the local business owners involved in this process? 6.1 If so, how? 6.2 If not, why not?	
	7 How do you see the future of backpacker tourism for your country/region/village in the next 5-10 years?	