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Ecotourism Planning and Sustainable Community Development: Theoretical Perspectives for Nepal

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ABSTRACT

One of the most pressing concerns arising from rapid growth of tourism in the developing countries is how to plan the destinations appropriately to optimize equitable benefits to local communities, and reduce adverse impacts of tourism. Fortress conservation, a conventional approach of protected area (PA) planning, is generally criticized to be ineffective, unethical, and non-local oriented (Lai & Nepal, 2006), and failed to improve the livelihoods of local residents living in or around the protected areas (PAs). The externally imposed rules and regulations on the PAs in many developing countries have resulted relocation of local people, limited their accessibility to resources and often created conflicts between PA authorities and local people (Nepal & Weber, 1995). In this situation, to enhance development of local communities vis-a-vis conservation of resources both natural and cultural, an alternative benign approach to tourism, generally known as ecotourism, is widely advocated as a comprehensive tool. However, how such destinations should be planned properly to enhance community well-being and sustainability has not yet been extensively elaborated specifically in context of Nepal. This paper thus critically reviews the theories of (eco) tourism development and planning with respect to the general context of developing countries, and further discusses on the linkage between ecotourism and sustainable community development. The review of four international cases, along with the discussion with local residents in the Annapurna Sanctuary Trail, and Sagarmatha National Park of Nepal, as well as interview with policy makers and ecotourism experts in Nepal, this paper concludes an approach of Community-oriented Collaborative (Co-C) ecotourism planning as appropriate to promote sustainable community development in the PAs of Nepal. The aim of the paper is to provide a direction for sustainable planning in the rural settlements.

KEYWORDS : *Eco Tourism Planning; Sustainability Community development; Theoretical Perspective ; Developmental Theories.*

Introduction

Situated in the southern part of Asia, Nepal, the Himalayan Shangri-La, is a landlocked country between two rapidly developing economies India and China. It covers an area of 147, 181 sq. km, of which around 83% is covered by the mountains and hills. Nepal exhibits immense diversity in geography, natural setting and culture, and has a comparative advantage for tourism development. PAs are the most popular tourist destinations of Nepal specifically for trekking, mountaineering, rafting, and exploring wild life, and diverse indigenous culture. More than 40% of international tourist arrived in Nepal prefer to visit PAs every year (MoTCA, 2011). The most popular trekking trails of the world such as the Annapurna- Trail and the Everest Base Camp Trail of Nepal are also within the PAs. Indigenous communities living in or around them are largely affected by rapid growth of tourism since 1950 when Nepal opened to outer world and the mountaineering expedition started in Nepal.

One of the most important aspects of tourism development, often highlighted by scholars, is its potential contribution to local, national and global economy. In context of Nepal, tourism remains a key contributor to national economy with 7.4% of total contribution to the national GDP, and 5.8% to the total employment (WTTC, 2010). It is one of the biggest foreign currency earners of Nepal with total earning of 330 million USD in 2010, whereby average income per tourist per day is 43.2USD, and average length of stay per tourist is 12.67 days (MoTCA, 2011). Tourism is undoubtedly a key potential of Nepal that can bring socio-economic development of the communities (Tiwari, 2009); however, implementation of appropriate planning and policies to ensure these potentials into reality is indispensable. Nepal started tourism planning efforts from early 60s through the First Five Year National Plan in 1956. Since then, tourism development has become one of the key agendas in the National Plans of Nepal and is strongly emphasized in the new tourism policy of 2009 and various master plans. Ironically, its contribution to local community development and conservation still remains tenuous. On the other hand, Government of Nepal had also organized several tourism promotional campaigns such as "Visit Nepal Year 1998", "Nepal Tourism Year 2011" and "Visit Lumbini Year 2012". Critics reveal that there is no much contribution of these promotional campaigns unless comprehensive tourism plans and policies are implemented to accrue benefits at grass root level i.e. community level.

It is well observed that the aim of the tourism policies and strategies of Nepal, like many other Third world countries, is to promote tourism for national economic growth by developing infrastructure and services; increasing the number of tourists; diversification of tourism products; and marketing and publicity (Pradhan, 2008). Paradoxically, Government of Nepal has not yet been

able to achieve the targeted goals, neither got success in their implementation. Besides few villages have been declared as ecotourism and rural tourism sites; national policies and plans have largely ignored the significance of local communities in tourism planning, and decision-making process. As a result, tourism is not contributing much to the development of larger communities, rather inducing many negative impacts on them. Several studies in PAs of Nepal pointed that unplanned or ill-planned tourism development is responsible to numerous problems of environmental degradation, waste generation, pollution, and loss of socio-cultural values and traditions (Nepal, 2003; Nyaupane & Thapa, 2004). In terms of economic context, studies also pointed that only 6% of the total tourism revenue goes to rural areas, whereby more than 70% of earnings leaked out in investment for imported goods and services (Lindberg, Furze, Staff, & R., 1998). These shortcomings along with lack of linkage of tourism with local economic system (Sharma, 1998), and governments' unidirectional focus on maximizing the number of tourists clearly demonstrate a lack of comprehensive tourism planning in Nepal. This paper has, therefore, explored planning perspective of ecotourism to contribute towards sustainable development in Nepal, which definitely would have wider significance both in theoretical and practical aspects.

Tourism and Development Theories in Context of Developing Countries

Tourism in developing countries is growing rapidly particularly as a market for international tourists. Evidences suggest that there is a growing trend of tourists from developed countries visiting Third World destinations specifically to enjoy the untouched (pristine environment) and exotic (tribal peoples in ethnic class) places (Scheyvens, 2002). It has become a significant economic sector in 11 of 12 countries that contain 80% of the world's poor (WTO, 1998 in Ashley et al., 2000). Many developing countries in line with the millennium development goals have adopted sustainable tourism or ecotourism as a benign strategy to cope with the problems of poverty and underdevelopment along with resource protection. It indicates that tourism has considered as an effective tool to promote development; however, what specific form of tourism and development is needed may differ with difference in destinations. It, specifically, depends on the local, political, social, economic and geographical context of the regions. Nevertheless, the most common justification for the promotion of tourism is its potential contribution to development (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Much of the tourism literature supports an argument that development theories and tourism have evolved along similar time lines with similar focus especially after the World War II (Telfer, 2002). Since then, a bulk of literature on tourism research has been produced. Scholars portrayed the relationship between tourism and development theories in an evolutionary order with support of four

well-known theories of development: modernization, dependency, neo-liberalism, and sustainable development. It is worth to note that the emerging paradigms do not necessarily replace the preceding ones, despite criticisms, and elements of each paradigm still exist and relevant today.

Firstly, tourism system during 1960s was equated with economic growth and development, which can be viewed as a part of the modernization paradigm. The core premise of this paradigm is economic growth which, according to Rostow (1960 cited in Sharpley, 2000) enables societies to advance through stages from traditional to an age of mass consumption. Developing countries promoted tourism growth to maximize foreign currency earning, internationalizing their economies, and as a means of achieving their national development goals (Opperman & Chon, 1997; Scheyvens, 2002; Sharpley, 2002). The perceived developmental contribution of tourism, for example through foreign exchange earnings, the multiplier concept and backward linkages throughout the economy, are firmly embedded in modernization theory (Sharpley, 2000). However, the narrow perspective of economic development through tourism was criticized to be destructive to the destination communities and environment.

Secondly, dependency paradigm gained prominence in 1960s as a critique of modernization, and assumed as one of the best-known Neo-Marxist development theories (Schuurman, 1993 cited in Telfer, 2002). The relationship between dependency and tourism was discussed by many scholars who actually highlighted the argument that developed countries or multinational agencies or greater capitalistic firms control tourism development and business and planning in less developed countries (Telfer, 2002; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). This argument is strongly supported by Lea's argument, which reveals that dependency theory of tourism reflects historical patterns of colonialism and dependency (Lea, 1988). It's therefore not surprising that dominance of developed countries and large companies over poor countries in terms of tourism investment, technology, goods and services obviously further reinforce the dependency and vulnerability to developing destinations. The solution yet remains on the approach we prefer to adopt for tourism planning and the type of development we want to achieve from the process. In this context, although scholars argue that multinational corporations have led to the underdevelopment of the Third World countries (Muller, 1979), it should not be also forgotten that tourism system by its very nature often depends on the international tourists mostly from developed world. Therefore, planners need to develop an appropriate approach to tourism planning in less developed countries.

Thirdly, under the theory of neo-liberalism, less developed countries promote their tourism product through open-market system specifically by attracting foreign and local companies, enterprises and tour management agencies.

Essentially, it seems that there always remain possibilities of competition, politics and power-play between and within local and foreign companies. However, neo-liberal paradigm does not address the issue of local-global competition, and fails to recognize the power relations at play (Scheyvens, 2002). The irony is that community-based initiatives or small companies are not usually able to receive much benefit from tourism due to the dominance of large foreign companies as well as local elites on tourism market. For instance, development of private large hotels or resorts may cut the benefits of small enterprises, or local initiatives. Thus, the model of development based on market liberalization and commercial globalization was also criticized as being failed to deliver socio-economic benefits and improving the quality of life of the poor people. On the whole, the narrow perspective of encouraging more visitors to a country, specifically adopted by policy-makers of developing world, to increase foreign exchange, was failed to link tourism with wider development goals of poverty alleviation and balanced regional development (Brohman, 1996; Cater, 1995; Mow forth & Munt, 2009; Scheyvens, 2002; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). More specifically, the idea of maximizing tourists' visitation which many developing countries including Nepal are now promoting, would not be much beneficial to indigenous communities unless they are considered as a key partner in tourism development process. Otherwise, more tourists could just mean more money for elite business people who have invested in resort development in key areas (Scheyvens, 2002). In this regard, the development theories: modernization, dependency and neo-liberalism, are critically argued for their lack of recognition of environmental and cultural sustainability as well as the importance of involving local communities in the development process (Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Telfer, 2002; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). The gradual increase in awareness of these issues, which are not effectively addressed in development theories including neo-liberalism led to the rise of an idealistic concept known as alternative paradigm. It advocates for long term well-being of local communities, for example, socio-economic progress, and conservation of cultural and natural resources. In this regard, concept of sustainable development was proposed by World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), which is subsequently adopted in tourism system in the form of sustainable tourism and ecotourism.

Ecotourism: An Alternative Approach to Tourism Development

One of the significant changes in tourism theories is the emergence of alternative approach to tourism development, which is extensively favored by the scholars to respond negative impacts of mass tourism (MT). Two distinct philosophies (i) the concept of MT, and (ii) alternative to MT, appears to be dominant in the literature. For many scholars, MT is non-local oriented, destructive and having high leakages, while alternative tourism (AT) is community-oriented, protective, and having strong linkage with local economy. The philosophy of AT

envisage tourism policies should no longer concentrate on economic and technical necessities alone, but emphasize demand for an unspoiled environment and consideration of needs of local people (Fennell, 1999). The conceptual shift from MT to AT is crucial to understand the evolutionary approach to tourism development, which was highlighted by Jafari (1989) through four theoretical platforms of evolution of tourism namely advocacy; cautionary; adaptancy; and knowledge-based.

Under the advocacy platform, tourism development is seen only from economic growth perspective specifically in post-World War II period, which is equated to MT approach. During 1970s, this conception was challenged by a cautionary platform responding to a broad pattern of apparently negative economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts resulting from rapid and largely unplanned tourism development (Weaver, 1998). While in early 1980s, adaptancy platform was extensively advocated as a concept of AT, which is assumed more benign alternative to MT (Gonslaves, 1987; Holden, 1984). In fact, relationship between these two forms of tourism was depicted in dialectical and dichotomous terms with AT clearly being 'good' option and MT the 'bad' option (Clarke, 1997; Weaver, 1998). Similarly, Mowforth and Munt (2009) stressed that the concept of tourism development can be seen as transforming from old to new version, fordist to post-fordist consumption and modern to post-modern tourism resulting into new characteristics such as individual type; unpackaged or flexible; real; and responsible socially, culturally and environmentally. Arguably, this notion of AT is affiliated with Murphy's more general conceptualization of community-based tourism (Murphy, 1985), which tends to occur at broader destination-wide or regional scale, and places natural and cultural resources at the forefront of planning and development instead of an afterthought. Under this concept, ecotourism can be regarded as a subset of sustainable tourism as well as AT (Weaver, 2001). Therefore, all forms of ecotourism can be sustainable tourism but not vice-versa.

The assumptions that the proponents usually consider AT as polar opposites of MT, and claiming that MT is large scale, externally controlled, unplanned and unstable while AT is small scale, planned, controlled and stable seems hypothetical comparison and illogical (Butler, 1992), and rarely encountered in reality (Weaver, 1998). The full-fledged AT as an option to MT cannot replace conventional tourism because of mass tourism's varied and many-sided associated phenomena. This is also what Jafari's "Knowledge-Based Platform" has entirely supported. This platform critically argues the previous theories of AT as biased against MT, and suggests for development of holistic knowledge-based concept that could support both sectors of MT and AT, and calls for their genuine adherence to the principles and practice of sustainability. In this regard, ecotourism as a

subset of sustainable tourism is widely advocated as a benign approach to MT. Although defined in a number of ways, the most formal and widely cited definition of ecotourism is provided by Ceballos-Lascurain (1996) who defines “ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel, and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features-both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvements of local populations”. The International Ecotourism Society also considers ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves environment and improves well-being of local people”. Indeed, the attributes of ecotourism are more like ethics and norms, and frequently reflected in the forms of principles, guidelines, and regulations (e.g. Blamey, 2001; Lindberg & Hawkins, 1993; Tourism Concern, 1991; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; Wight, 1994; Wood, 2002). These guidelines largely require the combination of both anthropocentric (development) and eco-centric (conservation) planning approach.

Ecotourism and Sustainable Community Development

Tourism scholars generally referred community as locals, residents, natives, indigenous people, or hosts (Singh, Timothy & Dowling, 2003), who are usually heterogeneous in characteristics, share residence in the same geographic area, and access a set of local natural resources. There exist wide variation of degree of social cohesion and differentiation, strength of common beliefs and institutions, and cultural diversity both within and among communities (ibid). The pluralism in community could make the implementation of ecotourism development more difficult and challenging. Nonetheless, ecotourism is rhetorically portrayed as an idealistic concept to solve all the problems of local community. It is widely discussed with regard to community development, and sustainability, but not necessarily linked with each other.

It is essential to know that theoretical evolution of ecotourism or sustainable tourism is actually originated from the concept of sustainable development (Welford, Ytterhus, & Eligh, 1999). Being a good idea, sustainable development is enthusiastically supported by the governments, non-governmental organizations and academics (Liburd, 2010). Rio Earth Summit (1992) pointed that sustainable development is more than about protecting the environment, and living within the carrying capacity of environment. In fact, it is about the quality of life, intra and intergenerational equity and social justice (Cater, 1994), and viewed as a balanced interplay among three components: economic, environmental and social sustainability and its essence is in the harmonious integration of sound and viable economy, responsible governance, social cohesion, and ecological integrity to ensure that development is a life- enhancing process. In this sense, sustainable community has similar concept as that of three components of sustainable development. According to Cook and Ng (2001) sustainable community is one

which has an enduring integration of social, economic and physical characteristics of our total environment, where local residents feel sense of belonging and commitment to their well-being.

Cook and Hyslop (2004) argued that sustainable communities must embrace two interrelated dimensions: one related to the concept of governance namely "having the authority" and "ability to take action"; and the other to the way the community cares for the long term well-being of its total environments namely "what actions it takes". Indeed, both dimensions require a high degree of self reliance and social capital within the community. Local communities must take responsibility for them, to have access to expertise and knowledge, and to have the capacity to make a real contribution to decisions which affects its members (Cook & Ng, 2001). More specifically, there are two basic principles of building sustainable communities, such as ethical utilization of resources, and intra and inter-generational equity, which is core to the concept of sustainable development (ibid).

Thus, sustainable community development is a viable alternative conceptualization of community development process that can encompass actions which ensure the meeting of needs of existing inhabitants of a community without jeopardizing the ability of future generations of inhabitants in that community to meet their own needs (Hope, 1996). It represents a direction or goal rather than an end state, and is a continuous process that minimizes consumption of natural resources; ensure long-term economic prosperity and social equity; maintain diversity; conserve heritages; and encourage community participation and team work. Several discussions substantiate that the philosophy of ecotourism and sustainable community development intertwine each other, and cannot be thought as separate approach. The concern of sustainability and sustainable development has been mentioned in every single piece of ecotourism literature; whether it is focused on economic, social, cultural, and environmental or all of them in combined way (e.g. Blamey, 2001; Dowling & Fennell, 2003).

The perceived potential of ecotourism as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it in their economic development and conservation strategies (Stem et. al, 2003). At local level, ecotourism is aimed to ensure long term inclusive development through the genuine participation of its stakeholders. Scholars argued that appropriate approach to tourism planning is crucial to reflect the meaning of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. However, Sharpley (2009, cited in Saarinen, 2011) contend that there is a serious gap between the rhetoric of ecotourism (sustainable tourism) and the reality of tourism development in practice. For example, ecotourism is portrayed as smaller in size and scale; however it may adopt larger scale with increase in the flow of tourists and with changing temporal

dimensions. Most importantly ecotourism is largely influenced by the forces of globalization and neo-liberalism that makes difficult to see ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development. In many cases, the growing environmental impacts of tourism indicate that sustainable tourism policies have been limited or failed to achieve its benign objectives (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011a, b). In this backdrop, the major concern is not on whether ecotourism is smaller or larger in scale, but how it is planned, implemented and managed to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development is vital. It demands a new direction of ecotourism planning which address the development issues of local people vis-a-vis conservation of resources and satisfaction of tourists.

Towards Community-Oriented Collaborative (Co-C) Ecotourism Planning: An Alternative Approach to Promote Sustainable Community Development in Nepal?

Destination communities are one of the key stakeholders of tourism planning, and development process. However, in many cases, tourism planning had often been the top-down approach leaving communities with little input or control over their own destinies (Murphy, 1985). The conventional approaches of tourism planning, for example, boosterism; an economic and industry-oriented approach; and land use or spatial tourism planning approach as outlined by Getz (1987) are failed to consider the role of local communities in tourism planning process (Hall, 2000). The major weakness is that most of the governments and planning authorities in developing countries focus more on the techniques of planning rather than the process which is the backbone of planning.

Community-based tourism planning process, after Brundland Commission (1987) has received substantial attention from and advocacy by scholars (Getz, 1987; Gunn, 1988; Haywood, 1988; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Murphy 1985; Reed 1997; Timothy, 1999; Simmons, 1994); however it could not alone produce successful results in developing countries like Nepal. Because, rural communities in Nepal often possess many constraints of development such as lack of skill, knowledge and financial resources for sustainable tourism development¹; presence of physical difficulties, remoteness, diversity and fragility of regions, and sometimes security (Sharma, 2000). Thus, communities in the Himalayas need strong support from outsiders such as the government institutions, NGOs and Private sector.

The complex and integrated nature of tourism system cannot be overlooked during the planning of PA destinations (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). The associated

¹ Authors' findings in the Annapurna Sanctuary Trail and Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park (2011/2012).

sectors or relational webs or space-based relations may have tremendous impact on the tourism and local communities. In addition, tourism planning is not always rational rather is political, and does not necessarily occur in single form, scale and structure (Hall, 2000), but is largely influenced by the interest of state, market, communities and networks. In such a complex context, it is essential to deal diverse dimensions of (eco) tourism within a broad framework, which could link vertical and horizontal dimensions as well as produce economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits in a balanced way. At local level, inclusive participation of community in tourism activities and services, cooperation among different local institutions and local capacity building should be the fundamentals for the promotion of sustainability. This is also justified from the findings of the review of four international examples of ecotourism development namely: Dzongu Ecotourism Project Sikkim, India; Ecotourism in Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) Kerala, India; Ecotourism in PAs of Belize; and Eco-cultural tourism in Xishuangbanna Nature Reserve (XNR) and Dai villages of Yunnan Province of China (Chan & Bhatta, 2011). The authors summarized the findings in terms of approach of planning, context of participation, and collaboration, strategies and techniques used, and benefits and costs of ecotourism development. They argued that integrated approach to ecotourism development with emphasis on the inclusive participation of local communities as well as the strong collaboration among actors at community level is fundamental to enhance equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits to local people, and conservation of their resources. In addition, implementation of local-based strategies and codes of conduct, and education, awareness and skill development trainings about tourism entrepreneurship, conservation, and hospitality are found crucial to enhance capacity building of local people and to integrate them into the mainstream of tourism development. It is found that ecotourism in Belize is able to achieve the objectives of economic benefits and conservation, whereas in XNR, ecotourism market is largely controlled by government and thus ecotourism projects failed to improve the well-being of local communities and conservation of resources. Similarly, cultural tourism in Dai villages of Xishuangbanna, and ecotourism in PTR and Dzongu of India have demonstrated better performances in community development, and conservation activities specifically because of their inclination and dedication towards participatory and joint planning approach (Chan & Bhatta, 2011) (please see table 1).

Table 1: Summary of Findings of Case Studies

	Dzongu, Sikkim, India [Bhatt & Liyakhat, 2008; Dzongu Ecotourism Project]	PTR, Kerala, India [Bhatt & Liyakhat, 2008; Kothari & Pathak, 2006; Thampi, 2005]	PAs of Belize [Lindberg & Enriquez, 1994; Lindberg, Enriquez & Sproule, 1996; Pat, 2001; Richardson, 2007]	XNR/Dai Village Yunnan, China [Donaldson, 2007; Li & Han, 2001; Sun & Bao, 2009; Tisdell & Xiang, 1996; Wen & Tisdell, 2001; Wang, Heo, Yamada & Hwang, 2009; Zhang, 1995]
Approach of Planning	Community-based; Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) Methodology with a framework of 4-D cycle: 'Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery were used.	People-oriented, and park centered community-based ecotourism approach. Many programs were conducted by local people who are responsible for surveillance of vulnerable parts of the reserve	Mostly consensus-oriented; public and private approach to ecotourism development; variation in approach in three PAs (Hol Chan Marine Reserve is managed by the government; Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary is managed by Belize Audubon Society; and Special Development Area Manatee is also under government management).	Dai Village: community-based approach along with involvement of private sector. XNR: mostly government-led, and incentive-based planning.
Participation	Maximum public participation was sought along with advocacy from community organizations, NGOs and tourism department of Government of Sikkim	Public participation through Eco-development Committees; community groups; and other organizations which can raise the genuine voice of local people.	In general, local leaders, and persons having interest on ecotourism; community organizations; and NGOs are actively involved in community oriented ecotourism approach, however the form and degree of participation differs	Dai Village: Effective and extensive participation of communities including diverse group of people from diverse profession; local people are involved in operation and management of tourism activities as well as working in companies. XNR: Very less participation of local communities in planning and management
Collaboration	Better collaboration and cooperation among local people; key individuals; Dongzu Ecotourism Committee; Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim; Mutachi Lom Al Shezum; and	No effective collaboration approach has been yet initiated. Responsible institutions often work in isolation, for example, most of decisions are made by Kerala Forest Department, while Kumily Panchayat	Better attempts of collaboration were identified. Belize Tourism Board takes responsibility of negotiator among government institutions; private sector tourism operators and their organizations; community	Dai Village: Strong cooperation and collaboration between private companies and local communities is observed, both are mutually benefited from tourism which developed strong sense of cooperation.

	government institutions. Private sector investment is almost nil.	(village level institution) provides licenses to hotels and commercial development near the reserves; and Eco-development Committees take care of tourism activities, often have less authority.	organizations; and individuals.	XNR: Lack of cooperation and collaboration between people, parks and private companies.
Strategies (techniques)	Dzongu ecotourism action plan; awareness and training programs for development of local skill, knowledge, conservation and local entrepreneurship; codes of conduct and ethics; seminars and workshops to enhance market linkage; publicity and marketing for home based ecotourism development; impact management by local guides and people were observed.	Specific zones are designated for tourism activities and conservation; centers for information, interpretation and a library were developed to educate tourists and local people; and trainings were provided to the members of Eco-development Committees specifically on tourism services and management.	Different trainings on local skill development as well as tourism and hospitality management were given to local people who are interested or already working in the tourism industry. Vocational trainings are provided through different well- established tourism schools of Belize. In addition, educational and impact awareness campaigns are often managed for different destinations. PAs also have rules and regulations which control unwanted tourism development.	Dai Village: Trainings on skill development for tourism- related activities are provided to local people; code of conducts and regulations were prepared and implemented; diverse tourism products are developed; diverse group of local people were involved in tourism activities; mutual trust mechanism was developed e.g. local people provided their space and expertise to private companies and consequently companies are responsible to promote tourism and pay salaries to local people.
				XNR: Incentive-driven approach, monopoly of government on tourism market.

Benefits	<p>People get benefits in terms of increase in income, employment, and awareness towards conservation of traditional culture and natural resources. Community well-being was improved.</p>	<p>Increase in park revenue, income and employment; earlier poachers and smugglers now turned into a very good tour guides and conservationists; debarking of cinnamon tree was controlled; portion of revenue was also invested for improvement of education, health and social facilities; and standard of living and life of local people is now better, secure and respectful and than earlier.</p>	<p>Significant economic benefits for local people were achieved; PAs are able to generate net financial profit(e.g. in Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary) from ecotourism; more benefits to communities and their support for conservation of resources was identified in communities nearby the PAs; and the tourism-related benefits have changed the attitudes of local people to support conservation</p>	<p>Dai Villages: cultural activities are continued; tourists are satisfied, more revenue is generated; more off-farming jobs within communities are created; diversification of transformation of economic structure (from agriculture into more commercial and modern type);traditional culture rediscovered and preserved; ethnic identity raised in community participation; increase in awareness for protecting culture and natural resources; extension of traditional culture of Dai people, XNR: incentives provided to local people; compensation paid to those who are affected by wildlife or development.</p>
Costs	<p>The project was initiated only after 2000, and ecotourism is still in initial stage of development. No adverse impacts have yet been noted, and local guides and people are working to minimize any negative impacts.</p>	<p>Uneven distribution of benefits is found as only those local people who were earlier poachers and few others are getting direct benefits.</p>	<p>Due to increase in tourists, many environmental and social problems are seen. Although, perceived benefits have changed attitudes of local people towards conservation, yet hard efforts are needed to distribute benefits equally among all so that all communities value resources.</p>	<p>Dai Villages: local people are mostly employed with low-paid salaries; possibilities of tourists getting cheated by local people (as they often sell fake products to tourists without any pre- information). XNR: Continuation of exploitation of resources; and there often exists conflict between people and park authorities. Ecotourism projects were failed to achieve their aims; the monopolized tourism market by the reserve administration restricts the involvement of local people and private companies which limits local benefits</p>

Source: Summarized by Chan & Bhatta (2011).

In addition, in case of Annapurna Sanctuary Trail (AST) and Sagarmatha National Park (SNP); the two of oldest ecotourism destinations of Nepal, the authors found that integration of local communities into the tourism activities is not satisfactory. Only a limited fraction of the local community specifically those living along the trail are receiving benefits from tourism development. Whereas people living off the trail are not much impacted by the tourism, and thus getting low benefits or almost not in many cases. Outsiders specifically the trekking agencies in big cities such as Kathmandu and Pokhara, have largely controlled the local tourism market. Economic benefits are mostly accrued to the outsiders and local elites. We found that ecotourism in these areas has accelerated the regional disparity, environmental degradation and loss of authenticity and cultural heritage². The new construction in the village such as hotels and lodge, to cater the large number of tourists, the commoditization and loss of cultural heritage with the impacts of globalization and technological development, the adoption of tourists' culture by the youths are some of the common issues and challenges in both cases. Using the multiple tools of data collection such as on-site discussion with local people (394- residents), participant observation (3-month period), interview with local leaders (18- interview), as well as policy makers and experts at local and central level (14-interview), this research concluded that ecotourism (or trekking tourism) planning in the PAs of Nepal is a fragmented approach which has been failed to encourage wider community integration and inclusive development. Majority of people are informed of the policies and plans only after the decisions are been made by the PA authority, with only exception in Annapurna trail where communities are to some extent aware of the projects. Context of collaboration is also ambiguous as majority of respondents mentioned that collaboration in tourism projects is weak if existed, and people are usually unable to collaborate in an effective and efficient manner. Moreover, results of the survey revealed that there occurs a loss of destination identity and inequitable distribution of tourism benefits to local communities which are actually due to lack of community empowerment, and their inclusive integration in tourism entrepreneurial activities; lack of coordination and collaboration among and within local and regional stakeholders, as well as lack of education, awareness, proper skills and financial support to the local communities. The growing numbers of outsider tourism entrepreneurs in the destinations to involve in tourism business and the outmigration of locals to cities in search of jobs and better facilities is contradictory in nature, and is the emerging main challenge for promoting sustainability in the destinations.

² Authors' findings in the Annapurna Sanctuary Trail & Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal (2011/2012).

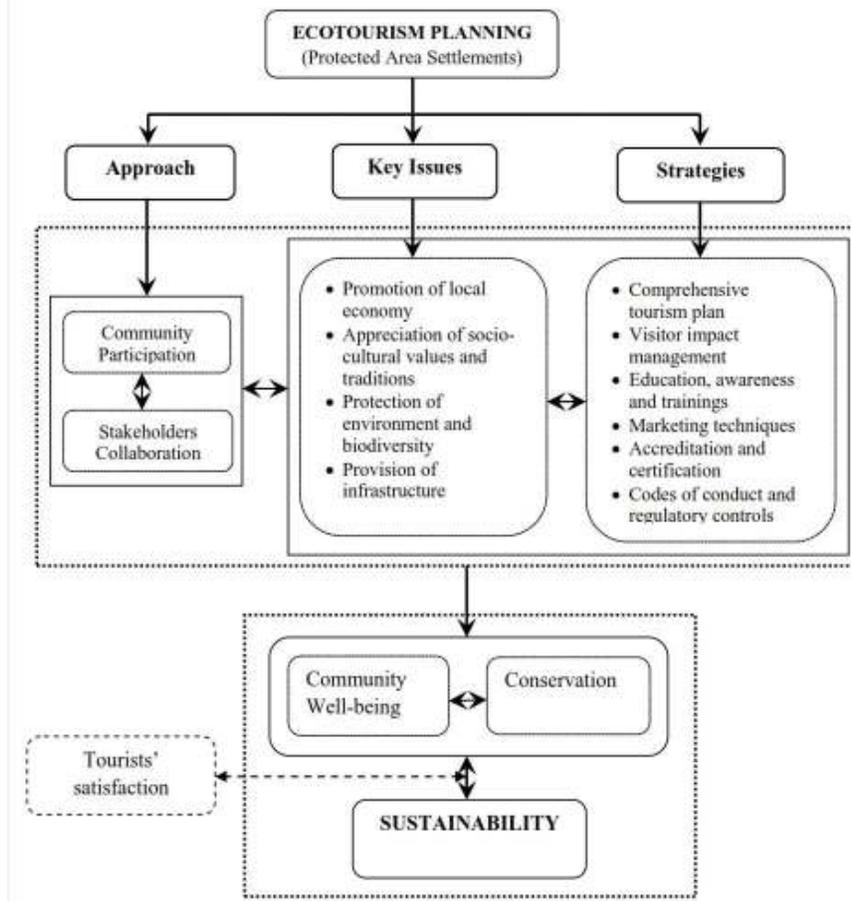
With this backdrop, authors suggest a concept of “Co-C Ecotourism Planning” as an appropriate approach to promote local community development vis- a- vis preservation of local heritages. The aim of this framework is to provide an alternative direction specifically to explore further on the issues of appropriate planning rather than providing an ultimate solution. The basic arguments of the approach are derived from the theoretical as well empirical investigation in Nepal, thus are relevant and logical too. Firstly, as the nature of (eco) tourism shows its dependency with other sectors and stakeholders, it is necessary to collaborate with them particularly to seek support and mutual benefits. It is more crucial in case of poor countries like Nepal. The participation and motivation of all stakeholders for collective action could effectively deal local issues and problems of destinations, overcome the challenges, and provide a direction for sustainable ecotourism practice. Here, the collective action must be advocated as a fundamental planning ethics and requirement, which will encourage key actors to involve in a joint planning system.

Secondly, it is crucial to maintain good connection of local policies with regional, national and even global tourism context. Local destinations require flow of tourists specifically from abroad, while international tourists seek to visit local destinations to explore something new and unique. Without proper integration of local context (supply-side) with global tourism system (demand-side), destinations may not survive for long-time. In this regard, Co-C approach would provide a platform where local communities can bargain for maximum benefits without any adverse impact on their lifestyle and resources, while private tour operators or industries also seek economic returns and good support from local communities. Additionally, dialogue and mutual sharing of ideas could suggest communities not to adopt growth- oriented approach (weaker) which the private sector is often interested in rather adopt growth- management approach (Welford et. al., 1999). This process, in fact, helps to recognize the areas of mutual interests and interdependencies (Hall, 2000), and encourage cooperation and partnership for mutual benefits i.e. balance between supply-side (residents life style, resources-focus) and demand-side (tourists choices, market- focus).

Thirdly, as evidenced from the review of case studies (Chan & Bhatta, 2011) and empirical observation in Nepal; community involvement and strong support from government, tour operators and NGOs need to be effectively operationalized at local, regional and even national level to maximize benefits to local communities in a renewable basis. The local policies, in addition to focusing on local- regional aspect, should recognize possible linkage of local resources with national and international tourism market. Most importantly, ‘think globally and act locally’ is needed to maintain localization under the umbrella of globalization. Participatory and collaborative attempts could be able to produce policies more favorable to attract international tourists and private tourism industry in their

areas in particular to benefit residents and sustain their livelihoods. Local people are generally much familiar with local resources, and therefore could have crucial role in tourism planning, while the government and private sector industry could play more proactive role to maintain local-global linkage through different promotional and marketing strategies to attract international tourists. Mutual cooperation and collaboration thus provides benefit to all stakeholders including local communities, private industry and tourists.

Figure 1 : "Co-C" Approach to Ecotourism Planning (Source : Authors (2012))



This paper thus hypothesized two fundamental conditions for Co-C ecotourism approach. Firstly, planning attempts need to adopt a process-based continuous approach where key concerns of local communities such as promotion of local economy, appreciation of socio-cultural values and traditions, protection of environment and biodiversity and provision of tourism infrastructure should be

addressed through comprehensive strategies (e.g. ecotourism plan; visitor impact management strategies; education, awareness and trainings; accreditation and certification; codes of conduct; and guidelines and regulatory controls) whereby community participation and collaboration among stakeholders remain prerequisite (please see figure 1); and secondly, the planning process must intend to maximize benefits to local people as well as other stakeholders, and work toward achieving an ideal condition (the outcome) where tourists (demand-side), and the local people with their resources (supply-side) will get mutual benefits from each other in a symbiotic manner (win-win situation). More specifically, the implementation of participatory and collaborative (i.e. Co-C) approach would produce positive impacts on local economy, society and environment that enhance community well-being and conservation of resources, and also satisfy the tourist demands. The conception and hypothesis of the Co-C approach is further discussed and supported by the relevant literatures and theories of tourism planning as below.

6.1 Addressing Key Issues of Communities

6.1.1 Promotion of Local Economy: Ecotourism is an important tool to generate direct revenues to offset management costs of PAs and for the promise of economic benefits of marginalized communities (Lindberg & Enriquez 1994). To promote local economy, strengthening of linkage of local economic activities with broader tourism system is imperative. It is necessary to identify reasons of causing weak linkages, and leakages of foreign currency earning. Some of the key reasons for high leakage from the destination are the lack of capital, lack of local ownership, lack of local employment and the inability to link tourism to the local economy (Lacher & Nepal, 2010). Local people at rural destinations are not much familiar and educated about tourism and therefore it hinders the level of local ownership, employment, and their ability to link local industries to tourism. It is thus essential to consider factors causing low levels of linkages. It is argued that through Co-C approach, stakeholders could firstly identify potentials of local economic activities as well as local production system, and then support to boost local economy through innovative methods of reducing leakages such as by increasing local ownership (Lacher & Nepal, 2010), creating a sense of responsibility in the village (Lepp, 2008), and also increasing domestic tourism (Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006).

In addition, role of private sector is crucial in promoting local heritage and products to the global tourism market. It could support to small, medium and micro tourism enterprises run by local communities. For example, a hotel may support different types of linkages such as adapting its local procurement and recruiting; participating in a neighborhood partnership or a formal shared equity venture; supporting local excursions run by locals and used by clients, or finding ways to

encourage their guests to spend locally (ODI, 2006). Similarly, local people could also work with tour operators and ground handlers; however emphasis should always be given to support locally-run excursions, and in exploring the ways in which tourists might spend more time and money in the local economy. It is beneficial to both local communities and private tourism enterprises, because perceived economic benefits to local people definitely increase their support to private tourism business development in local areas. In reality, however, only a minority of companies may adopt linkage approach unless there are provisions of incentives or facilitation that enhance the gains and reduce the costs. So, while implementation is by the private sector, much of the catalyst is needed from governments with assistance from allies in non- governmental organizations as well as community groups (ODI, 2006).

6.1.2 Appreciation of Socio-cultural Values and Traditions: Tourists interact with local residents and the outcome of their relationship is changes in host individuals and host community's quality of life, value system, labor division, family relationship, attitudes, behavioral patterns, ceremonies and creative expressions (Cohen, 1984; Ratz, 2000). The larger the cultural and economic difference between tourists and host residents, the more obvious and more significant these changes are (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Impacts are also influenced by the level of development of industry itself (Ratz, 2000), and how host and guest perceive cultural and social values of each other. The preservation of local culture, heritage and identity while simultaneously marketing them to the tourists is crucial concern. Community participation and collective action could produce better techniques based on local knowledge and skills which can effectively support to reduce socio-cultural costs of tourism. Implementation of code of conduct, social guidelines, regulatory control, educational awareness, and visitor impact management plan could appreciate socio-cultural identity and conservation.

6.1.3 Protection of Environment and Biodiversity: Protection of environment and biodiversity can be performed in a number of ways at community level including adoption of a bioregional approach, as well as advocacy of an educative ethic (Dowling, 2003). Ecotourism benefits PAs by generating revenue that can be used to manage and conserve natural habitats and species (Krueger, 2005), and also enable local people to receive economic benefits, which is the prime factor of motivation of communities towards protection of environment and biodiversity (Goodwin, 1996). In fact, ecotourism offers means by which people's awareness about the importance of conservation can be raised. In addition, it is also crucial to involve tourists in the environmental protection activities that can impart positive impacts on psychographic characteristics of tourists, for example, the possession of an environmental ethic and a willingness not to degrade the resource

(Wearing & Neil, 1999). Eco-tour operators, tour guides, and land and visitor management agencies should also adopt environmental management practices (Buckley, 2001). Similarly, management of visitors through zoning approach, and provision of accreditation and licenses to tour companies, and tourism-related enterprises is crucial to control development and environmental degradation and maintain quality tourism service.

6.1.4 Provision of Tourism Infrastructure and Services: Utilizing PAs for ecotourism activities needs development of infrastructure and services to the tourists. Local residents living in PAs could utilize the facilities which are actually developed in response to tourism growth and promotion. Infrastructure must be developed by using eco-friendly designs and technologies, and should accommodate needs of local people, and tourism industry. A comprehensive land use plan with specific zones for specific functions such as tourist information center, museum, art and craft center, trekking trails, recreational facilities, conservation and landscape areas could be prepared and implemented through participatory and partnership approach.

6.2 Process of Ecotourism Planning:

Following discussions not only highlights the fact that participation and collaboration are important in ecotourism planning, but also explain why and how these should be performed in ecotourism development in Nepal.

6.2.1 Community Participation (Putting the Last First): Tourism planning in Nepal, except few examples, is a top-down process leaving community participation at the lowest priority corner. Local communities are essential ingredients of hospitality atmosphere of destinations (Simmons, 1994) as well as key receiver of tourism impacts. Tourism industry uses these communities as a resource, sells them as a product, and in the process affects the lives of everyone (Murphy, 1985). Thus, it is essential to follow an appropriate process that should not exploit community resources for its own benefit, rather contribute towards long term development of communities. Definitely, it demands genuine ideas, inputs and inclusive participation of local people. Therefore, empowering the communities economically, socially, politically and psychologically through the distribution of power and adoption of inclusive approach to decision-making is fundamental to stimulate sustainable community development (Scheyvens, 1999). In this regard, besides government's responsibilities, local communities should also prepare themselves to play a stronger role in decision-making process, for example by developing strong civil society, efficient community organizations as well as effective advocacy forums, which could make political and policy changes through their political participation.

A visible, flexible and credible decision-making process in which general public has easy access is needed (Reed, 2008) specifically to prevent narrow special-

interest groups from dictating the development process. Participation is a useful tool to strengthen human and community bonds, enhance socio-cultural harmony (Smith, 1978), reduce unbalanced development (Wisansing, 2008), and is pre-requisite to sustainability (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). Several scholars have discussed about different forms, degree and nature of participation; however it is more crucial to understand what specific form, degree, and nature of participation is most suitable for ecotourism planning in Nepal. Although, Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation is widely advocated; its practical implication in ecotourism seems quite skeptical as it asserts unilateral approach with gradual rise in the ladder, rather than specific approach for specific context, level of engagement and capacity of stakeholders to influence outcomes (Tippett, Handley & Revetz, 2007). In this context, the Wheel of Participation (Davidson, 1998) could be more effective as it has adopted four different levels of participation namely information, consultation, participation and empowerment, each having three sub-categories which could promote appropriate levels of community involvement to achieve clear objectives without suggesting that the aim is always to climb to the top of the ladder. Any specific form or level of engagement could be performed according to the type of stakeholders, objectives of participation, and specific context of destination.

Wight (2004) also highlighted some useful techniques of participation such as public information (through advertising, newspaper and posters); information feedback (through briefs and focus group); consultation (through community meetings or gatherings, conferences, workshops and problem solving meetings); extended involvement (through advisory groups, task forces and charities); and joint planning approach (through consultation, mediation and negotiation). These can also be used as a continuum during planning process. Besides form, degree and techniques of participation, its nature is also discussed by several scholars such as Rowe and Frewer (2000) on the direction of communication flow; Thomas (1993) and Beierle (2002) as normative and pragmatic participation; and Lynam (2007), and Tippett, Handley, & Ravetz, (2007) according to objectives for which participation is sought. Since, there are numerous techniques of participation, emphasis should always be given towards "participation as a process" not as a "tool-kit approach" (Reed, 2008). In this sense, community participation is a continuous process underpinned by a philosophy that follows specific techniques based on the objectives, type of participants and appropriate levels of engagement, and emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust and learning (Reed, 2008).

Paradoxically, in a typical planning process, communities are consulted minimally near the end of process, often via formal public meetings (Wight, 2004). There might be several institutional and system-based obstacles to carry genuine

participation. Most notable obstacles are the presence of extensive bureaucratic organizations at various levels; the perception that participation is unnecessary, unwieldy and time-consuming endeavor and an idealistic dream; the view by the industry that a more comprehensive approach may pose threat to their business; and a lackluster interest on the part of decision-making officials in encouraging representational democracy (Haywood, 1988). To overcome these obstacles, on one hand, it is necessary to motivate government and private sector towards the value of community participation, so that government could ensure legitimacy of participation through legal provisions, and prove their credibility by adopting it in the planning process, while the private sector must understand that without local support their tourism business might not survive for long time. On the other hand, it is vital to consider interest and support of communities, as well as their readiness with respect to knowledge, resources and commitment to take part in tourism development. Community participation thus must be seen as incremental and continuous process, which expands once communities gain trust, develop mastery, and discover how they can make contribution in decision-making.

6.2.2 Collaboration in Ecotourism Planning (With Whom and What For?):

Tourism industry in Nepal akin to many developing countries is highly fragmented. Lack of cooperation among government institutions, private sector, NGOs and local communities (Nepal, 2004; Sharma, 1998) had made tourism plans and projects failure to achieve their targeted goals. Collaboration, a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders (Gray, 1989) is therefore inevitable, as it offers a dynamic, process-based mechanism for resolving planning issues and coordinating tourism development at local-national level (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Integration of tourism-related activities with other sectors, for example agriculture, forest resources, and local production system is indispensable to promote socio-economic development of communities. Many indigenous communities who depended on agriculture, fishing and natural resources have experienced relatively better quality of life after the initiation of ecotourism projects (Chan & Bhatta, 2011). Indeed, the 'go-it-alone' policies of many tourism sectors of the past are proved to be inefficient and ineffective, which suggests need of collaborative approach. No single tourism business or government establishment can operate in isolation without collaboration (Gunn, 1988, Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

Scholars often stress on the role of collaboration of stakeholders in the planning of tourism. However, it is worth to note that the legitimate stakeholder is one who has the right and capacity to participate in the process, who is impacted by the actions of other stakeholders and has a right to become involved in order to moderate those impacts, but must also have the resources and skills (capacity) in order to participate (Gray, 1985). Since, stakeholders possess pluralistic interest; complex problems at destination, therefore, cannot be solved through single-handedly by one group or individuals rather it needs inter and

intra organizational collaboration. Ecotourism planning in Nepal also requires organizational change, and new arrangement for collaborative planning, which is now lacking (Sharma, 1998). The institutions such as Nepal Tourism Board, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Reserve; the private sector tourism organizations; and the community and NGOs must work together initiating inter-organizational collaboration mechanism. Most importantly, collaboration at community level among different formal and informal organizations such as Mother's group, Youth Club, Conservation and Development Committees, and other social groups is very essential. The "representatives" from all actors should be defined at an early stage of planning process (Haywood 1988; Inskip, 1991) because failure to include legitimate stakeholders in the design stage only invites technical or political difficulties during the implementation (Gray, 1989).

Timothy (1999) and Tosun (2000) also noted that lack of communication between local communities, government, and private sectors is the problem that substantially contributes to maintaining a 'knowledge gap', and sometimes isolates communities from tourism development process. In case of Nepal where local communities do not often possess adequate skills, knowledge and capital, a strong facilitator or convener must be required to mobilize, prepare and empower local people to participate and collaborate in planning. Any local authority or local government or like-organization which have been formally established, possess the legitimacy, expertise and authority are assumed to be better suited for convener and they could bring stakeholders to the table, constructively explore their differences of opinion, and assist the search for common solutions or identify necessary trade-offs and compromises (Jamal & Getz, 1995). At national and regional level, Nepal Tourism Board; a quasi-governmental organization, could play a proactive role to bring all legitimate stakeholders together while at local level, specific committees such as Village Development Committee, Tourism Development Committee, or community-based organizations can play significant role to catalyze the collaboration process. Prior governmental assistance to communities could be effective to create new networks and strengthen existing ones; invigorate community institutions; and motivate and train community members to become effective leaders and participants (Wisansing, 2008). Hence, a strong collaboration is always needed rather than only focusing on community attempts to do everything entirely from within its own resources.

Conclusion

Community well-being is influenced by how people perceive tourism impacts and development in their areas. The positive attitudes and perceptions of local community would definitely make planning process easier and plans successful. The attitudes and perceptions are also correlated with their level of integration

in decision-making (governance) system. As such genuine participation and collaboration could provide communities an opportunity to empower economically, socially, politically and psychologically. It enhances their sense of unity, power, and thus well-being, which is indispensable to promote sustainability. In addition, sustainability is a process not an end state (Sharma, 1998) and it requires continuous effort driven by values of achieving balance between three dimensions of development i.e. economic, environmental and socio-cultural. In this regard, the proposed “Co-C” planning approach could promote local economy, protect environment, and appreciate socio-cultural values through innovative local strategies prepared collectively through joint planning approach.

Tourism industry, local communities, and local, regional and national governmental institutions should work together to enhance community well-being and conservation of resources as well as satisfaction of tourists. This is, in fact, a “win-win-win” scenario among local communities, tourists and PA resources (Nepal, 2000; Ross & Wall, 1999), and this paper strongly argue that such a symbiotic condition could be achieved through Co-C approach as participation and collaboration enhance management capability of PAs, and conversely ecotourism facilities and services could be developed, and local communities benefit from tourism activities, and also support for conservation. Thus, Co-C ecotourism planning could be an appropriate and alternative approach for Nepal, and its proper implementation would motivate stakeholders to achieve balance between supply-side (community-well being and conservation) and demand-side (tourist satisfaction) (Welford et.al, 1999), and eventually lead the destinations towards sustainability.

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