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Tourism, Empowerment and Sustainable Development: A New Framework for Analysis

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Abstract: For over twenty years, tourism researchers have examined how to determine whether destination communities are being empowered through tourism: there is much we can learn through analysis of that work. We outline and critique the most commonly used empowerment framework in this field as was first published by Scheyvens in 1999, which has four dimensions (psychological, social, economic and political) but which has been adapted and extended in a variety of ways. We also consider two other frameworks, and the application of a revised model in the South African context, before proposing that the Scheyvens framework would be strengthened through the addition of environmental and cultural dimensions. We draw theoretical inspiration from nested circle approaches to sustainable development to embed the dimensions of community empowerment within a series of ‘enabling factors’ that might support possibilities for community empowerment to occur, and, in turn, the empowerment dimensions and enabling factors are situated within a wider circle of the natural environment. We have structured this all into a new Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework.



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1. Introduction

In the global development field, empowerment [1] has become a ubiquitous term in the last few decades, used by governments, donors, development banks, NGOs, and corporate actors alike, often in conjunction with discussions of participation, communities, gender, and wellbeing [2–4]. By comparison, sustainable development discourse is less enamoured with the concept of empowerment, not always appreciating how vital empowerment can be for achieving the social, economic and environmental goals of sustainable development.

Meanwhile, for over twenty years tourism researchers have examined how to determine whether destination communities are being empowered through their interactions with tourism. This article draws from deep analysis of that work: it is discursive, rather than empirically-based. Specifically, the discussion below draws from a narrative review of the tourism and empowerment literature focusing on: theories of power, extant conceptual models of empowerment through tourism, elements and indicators of empowerment therein, methodological approaches, and distribution across geographies and forms of tourism. Our review aimed to outline patterns and identify gaps in existing scholarly understanding of tourism and empowerment, with a particular focus on the dominant conceptual models that were being applied. An exhaustive citation review was undertaken, using articles sourced through a keyword search of the Web of Science and Scopus academic databases. Books, book chapters, and doctoral theses were also considered.

Below, we outline and critique the most commonly used empowerment framework in this field [1], which has four dimensions (psychological, social, economic and political) but has been adapted and extended in a variety of ways. Taking inspiration from two

other frameworks, we then propose that the Scheyvens framework would be strengthened through the addition of an environmental and a cultural dimension. We also draw from nested circle approaches to sustainable development to embed the dimensions of community empowerment within a series of ‘enabling factors’ that might make, or break, possibilities for community empowerment to occur. In turn, the empowerment dimensions and enabling factors are situated within a wider circle of the natural environment.

The aim of this article is to provide a new framework for the analysis of community empowerment in the field of tourism studies, and to align that framework with thinking on sustainable forms of development. Before launching into a discussion of empowerment frameworks, however, we probe the meanings of power and empowerment.

2. Meanings and Applications of Power and Empowerment

A clear understanding of empowerment requires delving into the meaning of its source term, “power”. Power is often seen as a binary, hierarchical concept whereby it is synonymous with domination. This is power “over” and it implies that power is a means of influencing or dominating others to one’s own advantage [5,6]. Church and Coles [7] contend that social scientists routinely conflate power with domination or ‘power over’.

For applications to sustainable development, it is far more constructive to conceptualise power not as the capacity to dominate, but to see power as an enabling, liberating, productive force, which can include power “to” (a generative form of power which can include resistance); power “with” (the power of collective action); and power “from within” (a sense of self-belief which leads to confidence to seek changes which could improve one’s life) [8] p. 13. These latter understandings of power help to explain how the world has been influenced irrevocably by one teenage girl from Sweden who motivated a global movement for action on climate change [9]. We thus argue that power and empowerment should be central to discussions of both tourism and sustainable development.

While many tourism scholars have examined the planning and management of tourism, there have been few scholars who have overtly tackled the centrality of power to understanding tourism. Hall [10] p. 42 observes that power is always present in the interaction between tourism players, and that the various actors “all exercise power through the form of cooperation and conflict they enact”. Church and Coles [7] brought together a collection of papers in their book which clearly demonstrated how power worked across different scales and spaces. Other tourism scholars e.g., [11–13] have also regularly and repeatedly invoked notions of power in their analyses. They do so particularly to demonstrate power imbalances, asymmetries in the distribution of benefits and power brokering. Power imbalances between tourists and host communities feature in de Kadt’s [14] seminal work, which examined the social and cultural effects of tourism, whereas Knight et al.’s [15] exploration of local perceptions of poverty and tourism practice for four rural communities near Cusco, Peru, reveals how tourism processes mirror and amplify pre-existing power asymmetries within the villages. Others explore how power in tourism can maintain patriarchal structures [16,17], be embedded in destination governance [18], or be enacted via local gatekeepers [15].

Moving on to empowerment, there is no single definition that is widely used in the tourism or sustainable development fields. However, eight main aspects of empowerment can be discerned from a plethora of definitions of the term, as shown in Table 1. Key points include that empowerment is multi-dimensional, context-specific, both process and outcome-related, and demands redistribution of power to marginalised groups.

The notion of empowerment as something that challenges inequitable structures in order to enhance the wellbeing of individuals or communities is thus well understood within development discourse. However, this is at odds with some uses of the term whereby, for example, empowerment might be associated with personal gains to an individual who has broken through a ‘glass ceiling’ in the workplace, or if power is devolved to communities with the expectation they can then deliver on development goals set by external interests. Sardenberg [31] p. 5, uses the label “liberal empowerment” for this type of mainstream,

instrumentalist approach to empowerment. She argues that this approach does not seek to change existing power relations and structures of domination “that are responsible for exclusion, poverty and disempowerment in the first place” [31] p. 22. Effectively, the liberal approach robs empowerment of the power to bring about social justice.

Table 1. Eight propositions about empowerment.

1	Empowerment entails individuals or collectives gaining control over, and the capability to make purposive choices about, their lives and futures [19–21]. It involves awakened and increased agency [22] with individuals becoming agents of change rather than beneficiaries of ‘development’ [23].
2	Empowerment must be claimed by individuals, it cannot be bestowed. However, third parties may initiate and facilitate empowering processes and establish conditions conducive to empowerment, such as providing resources, training and sharing knowledge [24,25].
3	Empowerment is multi-dimensional and involves increased access to various bases of power [26], also known as economic, social, human, or political resources [22]. Crucially, despite significant attention to economic empowerment, especially with relation to women’s development, this alone does not constitute empowerment; e.g., political empowerment is a necessary condition for fundamental social change.
4	Empowerment may involve processes as outcomes [27–29]; it is not just a final state. Activities or actions, such as a legal rights training program for landless people, themselves may be empowering, and empowering processes may result in an altered level of power [28].
5	The processes and outcomes of empowerment are context-specific and take “on different forms in different people and contexts” [21] p. 33, [23,25]. Thus while it might be important for oppressed minorities in a global north and global south context to be both socially and politically empowered, how this should be achieved will vary depending on context-specific variables.
6	While empowerment may involve individual, household, community or societal change, individual change alone is not sufficient to bring about societal change [6,30]. In the words of Perkins and Zimmerman [28] p. 571, societal “empowerment [is] not simply a collection of empowered individuals.”
7	While all individuals are relatively more or less advantaged than others in society [1], the focus of empowerment must be on the interests of disenfranchised and marginalised groups of society [26]. Put simply, “to be empowered, one must have been disempowered” [25] p. 244.
8	Empowerment demands changed and rebalanced power relations [26,31]. It disrupts unequal power relations [26] that constrain the choices and lives of marginalised people and prevent human flourishing. An increase in the ability of some to challenge and resist oppressive ‘power over’ may be considered a relative loss of power for others [8].

Source: Adapted from [32].

Empowerment is not, then, simply about improving the wellbeing of individuals; it requires broader transformative change in society to overturn unjust structures which often inhibit those who are disadvantaged [24]. Thus a definition we prefer is as follows:

Empowerment is understood as the activation of the confidence and capabilities of previously disadvantaged or disenfranchised individuals or groups so that they can exert greater control over their lives, challenge unequal power relations, mobilize resources to meet their needs, and work to achieve social justice. [33], p. 115.

3. Empowerment in Tourism Research

Scholars of tourism were relatively quick to start discussing empowerment [34,35], and have since grappled with urgent questions of power, power inequities, disempowerment and empowerment in tourism [7,36–38]. Interest in the tourism-empowerment interface has been notable in writing on particular aspects of tourism, as follows: community-

based tourism [39,40], business tourism [41], coastal and marine tourism [42,43], cultural tourism [15,44–47], ecotourism [13,38,48–51], Indigenous tourism [52–54], nature-based tourism [55,56], rural tourism [57,58], wildlife-based tourism [49,59], and urban tourism [60]. Countries located in the Global South (including Botswana, Ecuador, Indonesia, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Namibia, Nepal, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, Mexico, Costa Rica, Fiji and Zimbabwe) feature prominently in the related literature. This geographic bias is to be expected given the concerted promotion of tourism as a pathway out of poverty [61]. In Sub-Saharan Africa, studies on power relationships and resulting empowerment or disempowerment stem primarily from writings about tourism based on natural resources. Nevertheless, the tourism and empowerment literature also presents various case studies from countries in the Global North, e.g., the USA, France, Switzerland and Japan [16,17,62,63].

Several authors hone in on tourism-linked empowerment and disempowerment of women [23,44,60,64–66], reflecting ongoing concerns about, amongst others, the relatively low status of women in tourism employment [67], their exploitation through sex tourism [68], patriarchal systems in the household and broader society [17] and so forth.

Empowerment has become a firm part of the lexicon of tourism scholars concerned with how tourism might “work for development” [36] p. 2. However, in their review of peer-reviewed literature on empowerment in tourism, Agahazamani and Carter found that 142 of 195 articles published since Scheyvens’ seminal work [1] were lacking substantial application of empowerment concepts [69] p. 336. Aligned with the growing research interest, scholars, policy makers, development practitioners and academics have created various diagnostic tools and methods for recognising and measuring empowerment in general [9,69,70]. Several tools have been developed expressly for tourism [1,71,72]. Even though concepts associated with the empowerment paradigm appear throughout the various publications on tourism and empowerment, very few scholars have employed an investigative tool that encompasses the manifold facets of empowerment. We argue that such tools are necessary if we truly wish to understand the effects of tourism on the lives of people in destination communities, especially those who are disadvantaged.

4. Empowerment Frameworks Designed for Tourism Studies

Now that the relevance of empowerment to tourism studies is clear, we move on to consider three frameworks which have provided conceptual tools for linking tourism and empowerment.

Firstly, the Scheyvens framework [1] draws significant inspiration from John Friedmann’s 1992 book entitled “Empowerment: The politics of alternative development”, in which he discussed psychological, social and political empowerment of those lacking power in society [26]. For Friedmann, “development involves a process of social and political empowerment of households and individuals”, resulting in sustained improvements in the “conditions of life and livelihood” and rebalanced power relationships between social actors [26] p. 31, [35]. Writing on empowerment through ecotourism, Scheyvens [1] added an economic facet to Friedmann’s three-tier concept to distinguish four levels of empowerment: political (to do with collective action and influence over decision-making); social (related to improving social networks and community cohesion); psychological (centred on self-confidence and a personal sense of agency); and economic (related to equitable sharing of monetary benefits and obvious material improvements in people’s lives). This gave rise to a framework designed to view and understand the effect of ecotourism initiatives on local people in terms of either empowerment, or disempowerment [1,65]—see Table 2.

Since then Scheyvens’ framework has been adopted, adapted and extended by a wide variety of writers across a range of different settings that include ecotourism in Mexico, and Namibia [49,50,72], cultural tourism in China [47,73], community-based tourism in Fiji, Indonesia and South Africa [11,49,74], and rural tourism in Nepal and Poland [23,58]. Although most scholars have applied the Scheyvens Empowerment Framework with-

out modification, a few have proposed the addition of environmental/ecological [50,75], cultural/socio-cultural [73,76] or educational [47] dimensions.

Table 2. Scheyvens' Empowerment Framework.

	Signs of Empowerment	Signs of Disempowerment
Economic empowerment	Tourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community. Cash earned is shared between many households in the community. There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (e.g., houses are made of more permanent materials; more children are able to attend school).	Tourism merely results in small, spasmodic cash gains for a local community. Most profits go to local elites, outside operators, government agencies, etc. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from tourism, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits because they lack capital, experience and/or appropriate skills.
Psychological empowerment	Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. Access to employment and cash leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society e.g., youths, the poor.	Those who interact with tourists are left feeling like their culture and way of life are inferior. Many people do not share in the benefits of tourism and are thus confused, frustrated, disinterested or disillusioned with the initiative.
Social empowerment	Tourism maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium. Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful tourism venture. Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g., to build schools or improve water supplies.	Disharmony and social decay. Many in the community take on outside values and lose respect for traditional culture and for their elders. Disadvantaged groups (e.g., women) bear the brunt of problems associated with the tourism initiative and fail to share equitably in its benefits. Rather than cooperating, families/ethnic or socio-economic groups compete with each other for the perceived benefits of tourism. Resentment and jealousy are commonplace.
Political empowerment	The community's political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups. Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups (including special interest groups of women, youths and other socially disadvantaged groups) and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies e.g., the Wildlife Park Board or the regional tourism association.	The community has an autocratic and/or self-interested leadership. Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture fail to involve the local community in decision-making so the majority of community members feel they have little or no say over whether the tourism initiative operates or the way in which it operates.

Source: Author.

The empowerment framework in Table 2 is useful as a guide to scan for markers of tourism-linked empowerment and disempowerment. However, from a sustainability perspective, the framework only reflects the social and economic facets of contemporary

tripartite interpretations of sustainable development: an environmental dimension is missing. This was rectified by Mendoza-Ramos [72], the second framework we consider, who modified the Scheyvens Empowerment Framework by adding an environmental empowerment as a fifth element. Mendoza-Ramos [72] used a set of 60 indicators to evaluate community empowerment in three ecotourism settings in a Mayan forest in southern Mexico. He then used a five-point Likert scale to score each indicator which enabled him to present the research findings as a “wheel of empowerment” depicting the relative levels of empowerment in each dimension [72] p. 102.

The third framework we consider was developed by Boley, at a similar point in time to Mendoza-Ramos’s work in Mexico. Boley tested another adaptation of Scheyvens’ framework in Virginia in the United States of America. The resultant Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) is positioned as a tool to “measure the extent to which residents perceive themselves as being empowered or disempowered by tourism” [62] p. 86. The study aimed to develop reliable and valid measures of psychological, social, and political empowerment” [62] p. 88, of individual residents. Arguing that established indicators of economic wellbeing at a community level were not suitable for analysis at individual level, the authors omitted the economic dimension from the initial version of their (RETS). The authors drew on the related literature and particularly Scheyvens’ [1] explanations, to create groups of statements under each facet of empowerment. Verification by tourism scholars, primary data collection in Virginia, USA, along with extensive statistical testing, produced twelve (12) statements which comprise the RETS.

The RETS has since been deployed elsewhere in the USA [77,78], Japan [63] and Poland, with the addition of an extra scale dimension, i.e., personal economic benefit from tourism (EB), in the Polish case [58]. Besides testing the cross-cultural validity of the RETS, the Polish application assessed the relationship between empowerment and resident support for tourism. In 2020, Joo et al., used the RETS together with the Behavioral Empowerment Scale [79], to correlate residents’ perceived knowledge of tourism, perceived empowerment and political action regarding tourism. Most recently, Aleshinloye employed the RETS and EB in Orlando, USA [78] to test the influence of residents’ involvement and economic benefits from tourism on their empowerment, and thus quality of life, and ultimately, place attachment. A second output from the same set of participants examines the relationship between emotional solidarity and empowerment and resident involvement in tourism planning [77]. Boley et al. [80] p. 125, noted that application of the RETS has thus far focused on developed contexts and “testing in the some of the world’s least developed countries . . . would be of interest”. If this occurs, it would be useful if resident views of the value of Boley’s existing three-dimensional interpretation of empowerment, informed the research.

In each instance when the RETS has been applied, verification of the cross-cultural validity of scale items was carried out first, followed by adjustment as necessary; however, no specific cultural empowerment dimension was considered in this model. Boley’s work therefore confirms the value of Friedmann’s 3 dimensions, and a later application in Poland and the USA brought an economic aspect back in, as in Scheyvens’ framework. Mendoza-Ramos’ work supports the 4 dimensions used by Scheyvens, but also adds an environmental dimension.

The above three frameworks were all carefully considered when the second author of this article developed a Tourism-Empowerment Framework to test in her own research [32]. Applied in South Africa in 2018/19, the Tourism-Empowerment Framework expands existing theorisations of the tourism-empowerment nexus with two added dimensions. Whereas existing frameworks embed increased pride in traditions and culture because tourists recognise their value and uniqueness within ‘psychological empowerment’, van der Watt created a discrete dimension for cultural empowerment. The research considered cultural empowerment to be evident when residents value and respect multiple, diverse local heritages; enjoy opportunity and agency to express their cultural heritage in all life domains; and have power to determine how their cultural heritage is portrayed. Further,

an environmental dimension focused on resident awareness of and connectedness with natural resources and pro-environmental behaviour, civic activism and advocacy.

5. A New Framework Combining Empowerment and Sustainable Development

Analysis and critique of the application of the above frameworks, and their variants, along with application of a revised framework in van der Watt's research [32], led us to develop a framework with new dimensions and components. In sum, the organising structure of Scheyvens' Empowerment Framework is adapted significantly in our Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework, shown overleaf. This represents a theoretical development in the empowerment literature, merging the fields of empowerment and sustainable development in the conceptual model. Our adapted framework is inspired by 'nested circles' models of sustainable development. Three spheres of the natural environment, the economy and society (sometimes known as 'the three Ps' of people, planet and prosperity) are identified in well-known models of sustainable development. More mainstream models followed by businesses and governments tend to follow an overlapping circles design, as in the first image in Figure 1: here, the place where the three spheres all overlap is regarded as the 'sweet spot' for sustainable development. However, critics note that the area of overlap in this model is actually quite small, suggesting that the majority of activity would still be unsustainable [81], p. 21. An alternative depiction can be seen in the 'nested circles' model, the second image in Figure 1 [81]. This provides a more holistic depiction of sustainable development because it suggests that: (a) the economy sits within, and thus serves, society, and (b) whatever happens in the economy and society takes place within the boundaries of the natural environment. Thus, it must not degrade that environment. This also aligns with a Doughnut Economics approach [82], which explains that no development within the economy or society should then breach planetary boundaries.

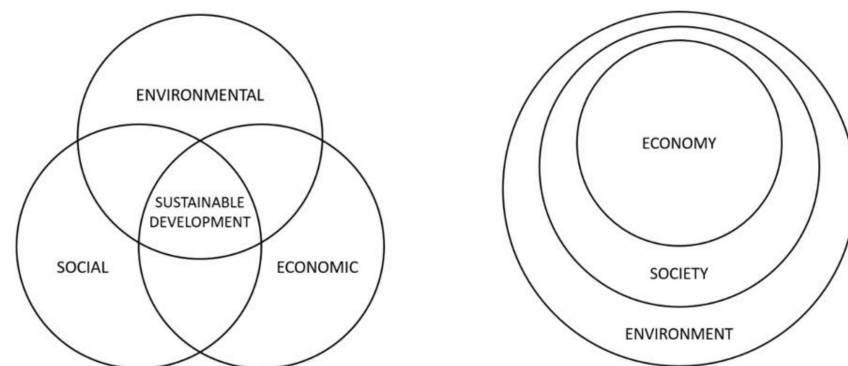


Figure 1. Three Spheres Models of Sustainable Development.

There are also three layers to the circles in our framework, Figure 2: the outer circle is the natural environment; the next circle contains 'enabling conditions'; and in the centre are six dimensions of community empowerment. Each circle is explained, in turn, below.

5.1. The Three Natural Environment Dimensions

Five aspects of the environment make up the outer circle within which the empowerment dimensions, and enabling factors, are situated. This suggests that empowerment can only truly occur for people in tourism destinations when the natural environment is not sacrificed for tourism, as this would eventually lead to a decline in both the health and quality of life of local people as well as the quality of experience of the tourists.

Too often tourism has contributed to damage to marine life, whether by mangrove removal to reclaim more coastal land for construction [83,84], hotels and cruise ships discharging waste into the water [85], or habituation of dolphins through provisioning [86]. Similarly, overcrowding of tourism sites along with inadequate provision of infrastructure can lead to degradation of flora and fauna. For example, in Iran too many people

undertaking desert tourism experiences leads to excessive clearing of vegetation, overuse of water resources and leached soil [87]. Land habitats are often destroyed when golf courses are created for tourists [88], or when conservation land becomes the site for tourism infrastructure such as lodges or safari tours [89,90]. Tourism resorts are known to place heavy demands on freshwater ecosystems when they want to indulge the desires of tourists by providing individual plunge pools for every unit or use irrigation to keep their golf courses lush and green: in Goa, India, this has meant farmers are short of water for their crops [91]. And, as we know, air transportation continues to pollute the atmosphere and leads directly to climate change [92].

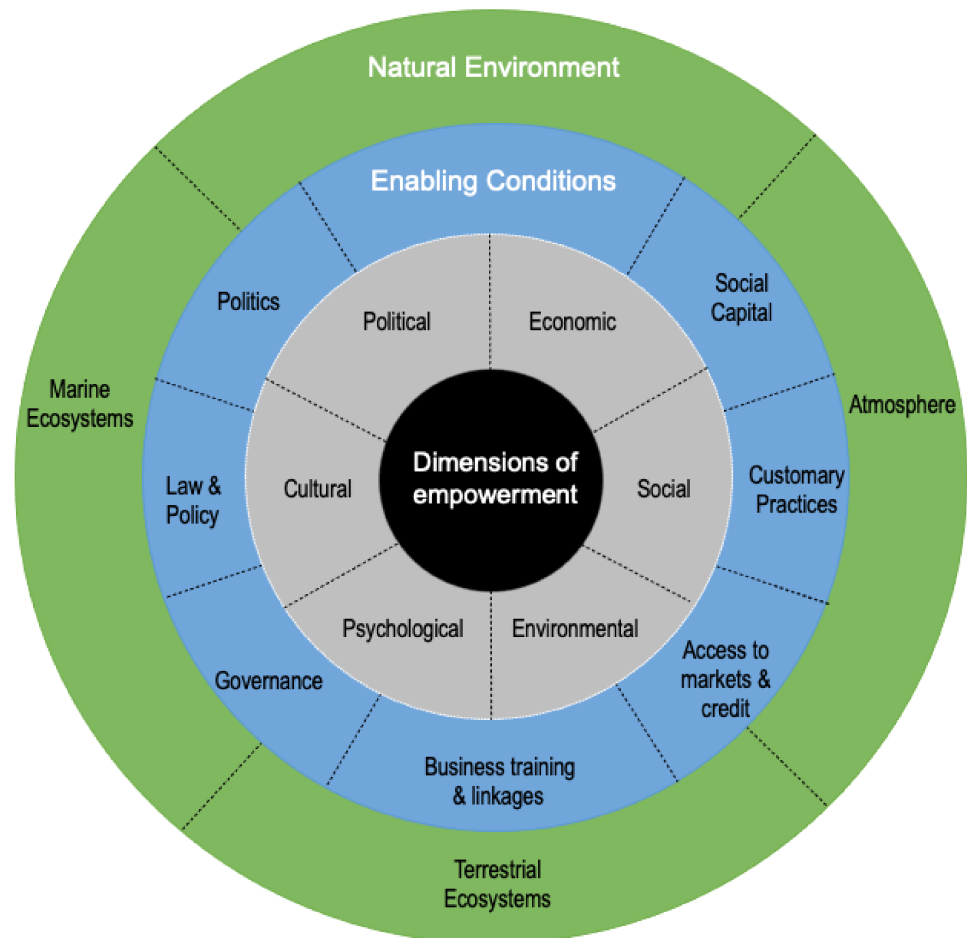


Figure 2. Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework.

5.2. The Seven Enabling Conditions

The middle circle of Figure 2 suggests that there are seven conditions that can enable (or disable, if they are not present or are a negative force) empowerment of communities living in tourist destinations. For example, government-funded training, credit schemes for small businesses, or support from business networks, can be important enabling factors. This layer of enabling conditions was brought into Figure 2 in response to criticisms of the glorification of the local scale in alternative development discussions of empowerment [93,94]. For too long, many advocates of community empowerment, including Scheyvens [1], overlooked the significance of external factors that impact on possibilities for empowerment. The logic behind the three circles in Figure 2 is that, while a focus on community-level empowerment is worthwhile, the opportunities for this to occur are influenced by a range of other forces including state, civil society and corporate influence, operating at local, regional, national and supranational levels. Community-centred

approaches will not empower the poor if there are not adequate enabling factors in place. Essentially, processes at work at a wide variety of scales and involving diverse actors set the context within which empowerment through tourism does, or does not, occur.

A brief explanation of each enabling factor follows. The state is responsible for national **laws and policies**, which directly influence who owns and benefits from tourism 'on the ground'. For example, to avoid the foreign domination of the tourism sector seen in a number of small island destinations, in Vanuatu policies were put in place via the Foreign Investment Promotion Act to reserve small scale accommodation and tour guiding businesses for citizens [95]. Conversely, government policies can obstruct small businesses especially if there are high compliance costs [96] e.g., if fruit vendors on a beach are required to be licensed and to possess health and safety certificates. **Politics** can also be an enabling or disabling factor because, for example, political instability or a corrupt government impedes opportunities for all tourism businesses to thrive [97]. **Governance** refers to the rules, mechanisms and institutions that enable and regulate decision-making, resource allocation, accountability, and interactions between actors within and beyond the tourism system [12,98–100]. This can also affect empowerment. For instance, in a marine tourism destination in South Africa, the allocation of permits for activity operators and membership rules of the local tourism organisation side-lined less advantaged residents from tourism benefits and decision-making.

Other enabling factors are more strongly associated with society and culture. **Social capital** refers to the bonds with others in one's own community, as well as 'bridging' social capital—that is, connections with others outside of your immediate community who are likely to support you [38,101]. Two unemployed youth might both move to a nearby town to work for a marine tourism operator, but the one whose uncle manages the boat crew is more likely to have opportunities for training and upward progression within their role. In terms of **customary practices**, a person brought up with a strong sense of pride in their cultural identity might have the confidence to establish their own cultural tourism enterprise that is unique and appealing to tourists, and which, in turn, helps to educate the tourists about the value of cultural diversity. Similarly, by supporting customary land ownership a government provides opportunities for its citizens to be owners of their own tourism enterprises rather than merely employees in resorts owned by multinational companies [36]. By contrast, some customary practices might undermine opportunities for empowerment by requiring strict adherence to traditional norms which, for example, preclude women from accessing employment outside of the home.

When considering whether residents have the opportunity to be empowered by tourism, we are often effectively thinking about people who wish to start their own small business. In these cases, the enabling factors of **access to credit, business training and linkages**, and **market access** come into play. To provide one example that encapsulates these issues, we can turn to the Pacific island state of Vanuatu. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Vanuatu received more visitors via cruise ships than by air [102]. Formal employment opportunities on cruise ships are limited to those with specific education and training, and, as the cruise ships are only in port for a few hours each time, local accommodation providers cannot benefit from this form of tourism. However, cruise ships theoretically provide a good opportunity for local tour operators to do good business. To establish a tour business, one needs a form of transportation, at the very least, and the ability to pay fees for registering with appropriate government authorities. Accessing credit to buy a van or boat is difficult when commercial lending rates tend to sit at around 20 percent interest, and customary land cannot be used as collateral [95]. Most often, small operators thus rely on their own savings and savings of close relatives, drawing on their social capital to start a business.

Enabling factors for small businesses were deficient in the case of tour operators wanting to access cruise passengers in Vanuatu. A major barrier was that tours needed to be listed by an agent employed by the cruise ship company as an official provider of tours, otherwise no custom would be directed their way. During research in Vanuatu in 2013 [95],

the first author was made aware of a number of small tour operators who were frustrated that, despite cruise ships calling into the capital, Port Vila, three or four times per week during high season, they could not access clients from the cruise ships. Albert was one such operator. He started Lelepa Tours after working in hospitality for 6 years for Le Meridien Hotel. He hoped the tour company would assist his family on his home island of Lelepa, which could be visited on a day trip from Port Vila. The attractions of Lelepa include swimming, fishing, cultural interaction and hospitality. There are 400 people living on the island, but there are few business opportunities apart from small shops. At its height, Lelepa Tours provided 2 permanent jobs to cleaning staff on the island, employed 2 office staff in Port Vila, plus it provided 10 jobs for others who work whenever tours are booked and income to artefacts vendors on Lelepa. With proceeds from the business, Albert also made direct contributions to churches on the island, chiefs, youths and women's groups, based on requests. While his business had modest success, Albert was frustrated that a number of businesses owned by local people faced barriers to accessing cruise ship custom. In 2010, out of the 140,000 tourists that came on cruises to Vanuatu that year, Albert only received bookings from 3 small family groups (who booked directly over the internet). Similarly, Bakro Tours, another indigenous business, received only 6 tourists off cruise ships in a 3 month period in 2010. When first approached, the agent working for the cruise company told Albert he would need public indemnity insurance before his tours could be sold to passengers, so Albert obtained this (at a cost of almost NZ\$2000 per annum), Albert sent his boat drivers to do a maritime safety course. He went back to the agent but then he was told 'your tour is too far away'—even though he could pick up tourists in the morning and have them back in Port Vila by 3 pm, in time to re-board their cruise ship. As one business owner said, people in Vanuatu should be able to have a fair go at running their own business: "Tourism is a big cake. We need to share the cake. But some people want to eat it all themselves" (Ni-Vanuatu business owner: March 2011).

5.3. *The Six Dimensions of Empowerment*

The middle circle of Figure 2 is where the six dimensions of empowerment are located. This includes the psychological, social and political dimensions common to all three models discussed earlier, plus the economic dimension added by Scheyvens [1], and the environmental dimension brought in by Mendoza-Ramos [72]. Our sixth dimension is cultural empowerment, which we argue should be central to thinking about empowerment going forward, based on commitment to supporting the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous cultures and other groups with unique cultural identities. We acknowledge that anthropologists, sociologists and others have in the past created single dimension frameworks that focused on the social or cultural dimensions of tourism impacts [89,103–105]; however, with the exception of Ningdong [73] and Kunjuraman [76], the cultural dimension has not been prominent in tourism-empowerment frameworks to date.

The significance of each of these dimensions will now be explained in turn. Note that the dimensions categorised here serve an analytical purpose and can guide the reader, but in reality they are interrelated [44], and mutually reinforcing or eroding.

In Scheyvens' framework, **economic empowerment** includes earnings from tourism-related activities as well access to productive resources. It is evidenced by employment and businesses opportunities, sustainable economic gains, equitable distribution of benefits and improvements to infrastructure and buildings. The purported ability of tourism to bring about better economic futures for local people is extensively researched, as shown by the growing number of studies of the tourism income-poverty alleviation relationship. While McMillan, et al. [23] claim that some authors focus solely on economic empowerment through salaried employment or cash incomes from sales to tourists and neglect other dimensions of empowerment, it is clear that such earnings may well ignite other forms of empowerment. For example, Moya [106] finds that earnings from an ecolodge at Chira Island, Costa Rica, supplement household incomes substantially which enables women to support their families with food, clothing and healthcare. Furthermore, as the women

bought fresh produce locally and encouraged their guests to purchase from the local art group, the wider community gained additional income. The community's initial social disapproval of roles outside of cultural norms evolved to recognition for the women as role models, elevating their social standing, and a source of pride for the community—this shows links to psychological and social empowerment as well.

It is also important to be aware of barriers to economic empowerment, and ways in which tourism can entrench inequalities. In many instances, income from tourism flows to a limited number of individuals and households [107], concentrating in the hands of those with more power e.g., male entrepreneurs. Thus, those implementing tourism projects and aiming for empowerment need to explicitly consider both class-based inequalities [66] and possible racial discrimination [108]. Furthermore, lack of access to finance, entrepreneurship training and mentorships, can make it extremely difficult for economic empowerment to occur through tourism [107]: thus, they are listed as enabling factors in Figure 2.

Psychological empowerment refers to an increase in self-esteem, confidence, and dignity through people's participation in tourism [1]. For example, Annes and Wright [17] demonstrate that through participation in farm tourism, women in rural France could pursue personal aspirations, escape from social isolation, build social networks and develop greater self-confidence. Psychological empowerment may be derived from, or lead to, individuals undergoing training or developing new work-related and life skills [54,55]. Moya [106] p. 133, explained how significant psychological empowerment was for women in Costa Rica as they had taken on new roles, such as driving boats and participating in trade fairs, thus the women now believe "in this life there are no barriers". Unfortunately such psychological empowerment does not always lead to economic empowerment, as structural inequalities including patriarchy and racism can still limit this [16].

Scheyvens describes **social empowerment** as a "situation in which a community's sense of cohesion and integrity has been strengthened" through tourism [1], and investment in projects benefitting the wider community, such as health or childcare facilities, is evident. This occurred in Costa Rica, for example, when—in response to the recurring risk of devastating seasonal forest fires—a women's ecotourism group convened the island's first group of trained volunteer firefighters, organising training for themselves and local farmers [106]. A similar example is provided by Movono and Dahles [74], who narrate how a female tourism entrepreneur in Fiji mitigated the initial jealousy directed at her by training other women so that they too could benefit from tourism. Other interesting examples of tourism enhancing social empowerment include using income from tourism and hunting concessions in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, to fund social services including scholarships for local students and paying for funeral expenses in the community [109].

However, tourism can also increase tensions between residents, fuel new social rifts, and lead to social ills, which are signs of social disempowerment. For example, Ishii [110] concluded that new tourism-related income generated by Akha women in Thailand did not accord with men's patriarchal views, and the men subsequently turned to alcohol and drug use, ultimately resulting in community dissolution. Meanwhile, in Peru, Knight and Cottrell [15] observed a sense of marginalisation and powerlessness among non-tourism residents stemming from being 'looked down on' and dominated by members of the village tourism association.

Political empowerment manifests when communities participate in and guide decision-making about tourism in their area, including the ability to choose not to pursue tourism. As the concerns about 'overtourism' have grown around the globe from 2017 onwards [111,112] the need for communities to have more control over tourism 'in their own backyards' has become more urgent. Examples of political empowerment in action include communities being part of tourism planning processes from the outset [113], having direct control over the distribution and spending of tourism revenues [109], and, indeed, stopping development from taking place when it does not align with their interests [106]. In Botswana, communities developed formal institutions that negotiate with the state and

private sector and manage tourism for collective benefit; this is associated with social empowerment when, for example, communal infrastructure such as water supply systems is then provided [109]. When political empowerment occurs through involvement in tourism, this can also translate into wider power for formerly marginalised people; for example, Movono and Dahles [74] describe how female tourism entrepreneurs in Fiji had developed sufficient confidence that they were able to effectively represent women's issues in village political fora.

Conversely, there are also numerous examples of power imbalances and distortions in decision-making around tourism development. For example, Booyens [114] found that residents of Soweto felt disempowered by their lack of control over operators offering 'township tours' and their limited opportunities for participation in tourism. Meanwhile, in a review of the governance of Ikona Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Tanzania, Robinson and Makupa [59] reveal concerns of local leaders that the Ikona WMA administration failed to report regularly to communities on incomes and expenditures of the WMA as required by regulations. This demonstrates political disempowerment of communities, which in this case also limits their economic gains from tourism.

To understand **environmental empowerment**, we draw from Mendoza-Ramos [72] work on indicators, specifically: knowledge of and commitment to biodiversity conservation; existence of environmental education programmes, rehabilitation programmes, and/or conservation research; presence of environmental management activities; and "how these factors have affected the community's ability to gain power to protect and preserve the surrounding ecosystem" [53]. A comprehensive tourism-empowerment analysis in an Indigenous Mayan community near Palenque World Heritage Site, Mexico, identified three positive signs related to environmental empowerment: reduced participation in destructive activities (e.g., hunting and logging); community cleaning policies; and inclusion of environmental and cultural awareness in tour guide narratives [53]. Tran and Walter [66] and Alonso-Almeida [41] demonstrate the empowering influence of individuals committed to personal environmental responsibility. Women involved in an ecotourism project in Vietnam used newly acquired knowledge about waste management for their accommodation establishments to influence rubbish management in their commune. Through active lobbying and awareness activities, they turned around a situation wherein villagers indiscriminately discarded rubbish and polluted the river with animal remains and plastic bags. Tran and Walters report that "most of the households in the commune now pay a small monthly fee for garbage collection and the community is noticeably cleaner" [66]. In another example from water-scarce Morocco, tertiary-educated female owners of tourism businesses were committed to resource efficient business practices, and enabled employees to participate in the management of a critical resource through water management training [41].

Ideally, environmental empowerment would align with the ideas now being shared about 'regenerative tourism' wherein the presence of tourism 'leaves an environment in a better state than when tourists entered', something that has synergies with Indigenous conceptions of the relationship between humans and the environment [115]. However, in reality this requires more than just a few hosts with environmental education, and it can be challenging to fully realise environmental empowerment. For example, in the example of the Mayan community which had turned around previously destructive environmental practices, above, the finding that the commitment to environmental conservation is "because it adds value to ecotourism, which therefore is related to profits" [53] is disquieting. It does not bode well for the conservation of Mayan rainforests should ecotourism not deliver the economic benefits desired by communities.

Cultural empowerment recognises and values the cultural heritage of a place and the people which make up the tourism destination. This acknowledges the position taken by Indigenous communities, who understand "... cultural diversity as the root of a more moral, spiritual, ethical and sustainable way of life" [81] p. 21. It values culture in the way in which tourism is played out. Thus, tourists should have the opportunity to be

informed about local culture as part of their experience, with people able to self-represent their culture in an inclusive way [116], in terms of, for example, the way in which cultural performances or cultural tours or collections of cultural artifacts are planned. In turn, the people from that area will feel that their culture is respected by tourists. Cultural empowerment can also occur when a state tourism destination in Australia incorporates Aboriginal perspectives and thus presents their culture as living and dynamic, which helps to disrupt stereotypes [117].

This is the opposite of the sort of cultural disempowerment that goes hand in hand with cultural exploitation and denigration for tourism purposes [118,119]. For example, Dennis O'Rourke made the award-winning ethnographic film 'Cannibal Tours' which depicted rich European tourists on a luxury, small-scale cruise up the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea. Here, the tourists clearly wanted to capture photos providing evidence of the savage, wild, cannibals of their imagination, rather than genuinely learning about the nuances of local cultures from their interactions with the people of this special place [120].

6. Application of the Empowerment Framework

The framework in Figure 2 encourages researchers to consider the impacts of tourism in a particular destination area on the natural environment. Its primary focus, however, is that it prompts researchers to ascertain whether tourism has contributed to the six dimensions of empowerment, and to determine what factors have enabled or prevented empowerment from occurring. To make it easier for researchers to discern where empowerment is occurring, Table 3 lists the six dimensions of empowerment in the left-hand column, then indicates 'markers of empowerment' in the right-hand column.

Table 3. Markers of Empowerment of Destination Communities.

Dimension	Markers of Empowerment
Economic	Tourism brings lasting economic gains to households and offers equitable access to employment opportunities. Those from marginalised backgrounds have opportunities to gain senior positions in the tourism sector or run their own tourism-related enterprises (e.g., restaurants, craft stalls). Marginalised households are represented in local trade/commerce associations, and they can access the means of production e.g., land, capital.
Psychological	Respect of outsiders for the natural and cultural assets of the area leads to an enhanced sense of pride among the destination population. Increased earnings from employment and small business opportunities also leads to increases in self-esteem and social standing for formerly lower status sections of society e.g., women and ethnic minorities. Training and education opportunities, as well as interaction with tourists, enhances people's self-confidence and broadens their engagement in society.
Social	Tourism creates opportunities for people to be more involved in community activities (e.g., village beautification programmes, farmer's markets) which builds social cohesion. Tourism supports networks that bring people from different backgrounds together. Tourism contributes to creating places, infrastructure and services that benefit all local residents.
Cultural	Cultural heritage—customs, languages and values as well as cultural sites—is valued and respected by tourism businesses and local residents. Tourism enterprises provide authentic portrayals of culture, allowing Indigenous groups, in particular, to self-represent their culture. Those from cultural minorities have an enhanced sense of pride due to interest in their culture from tourists and the ways in which their culture is presented to tourists.
Political	Tourism planning processes actively seek out voices of a wide range of people in the resident community and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies. Local political structures provide a forum for residents to easily bring forward any concerns they have about the operations of tourism businesses or developers.

Table 3. *Cont.*

Dimension	Markers of Empowerment
Environmental	Residents have an enhanced awareness of the intrinsic value of the natural environment and are involved in conservation efforts. People show willingness to change behaviours to avoid environmental degradation or risks. Tourism enterprises take a lead in implementing sustainable practices and also incorporate environmental education for guests and the resident population into their work. Local government bodies actively monitor the impacts of tourism on the environment, and ensuring regulations—as well as good conservation practices—are followed.

Source: authors, with inspiration from Mendoza Ramos [72] and Scheyvens [1].

7. Conclusions

Empowerment has become a firm part of the lexicon of scholars concerned with how tourism might “work for development” [36]. This article endorses the work of multiple researchers who have employed various empowerment frameworks in their studies in recent years. The literature presented herein, however, provides a mixed picture of the relationship between tourism and empowerment. Tourism sometimes leads to empowerment through extra household income, strengthened self-esteem, improved social status, a stronger sense of community and increased voice in decision-making, but at other times disempowerment results from inequities in the distribution of income, reinforced social divisions and entrenched patriarchal systems, and power imbalances in political processes. What is clear is that where empowerment does occur through tourism, this enhances people’s wellbeing and future prospects. It is rare, however, to find examples in practice where all dimensions of empowerment are improved by the presence of tourism.

The article has focused, however, on making a theoretical rather than an empirical contribution by demonstrating the value of merging the fields of empowerment and sustainable development, as demonstrated in the conceptual model (Figure 2). This model reinforces the centrality of empowerment as a concept to consider when analysing the impacts of tourism on people’s lives in destination communities. In doing so, it draws greater attention than most other models to the need to consider tourism’s impacts on the natural environment. Embedding the dimensions of empowerment within the outer circle of the natural environment was a deliberate attempt to draw attention to the urgent need to consider what damage tourism, especially when it occurs at scale, can do to the health of marine and terrestrial ecosystems as well as the atmosphere—not least through climate change. Aviation and related carbon emissions [92] are often the ‘elephant in the room’ in discussions of sustainable tourism. We need to ensure that empowerment frameworks do not ignore critical issues associated with human impacts on the natural environments of destination communities: this is a pressing issue in light of what many hope will be a post-COVID-19 pandemic resurgence of tourism to former growth levels. Essentially, empowerment can only truly occur when the natural environment is not sacrificed for tourism, for this would eventually lead to a decline in both the health and quality of life of local people as well as the quality of experience of the tourists. As most Indigenous peoples understand, the health of people and planet are intimately connected.

Figure 2 has also elaborated upon existing frameworks by positing that cultural, as well as environmental, dimensions should be integrated into all discussions of tourism and empowerment. This should help to ensure that due consideration is given to the need to respect living cultures, as well as heritage. In addition, the revised empowerment framework situates the dimensions of empowerment within a range of social, economic and political ‘enabling conditions’. The idea here is that empowerment of those living in tourist destinations is more likely to occur when certain factors (such as policies supportive of small business, and market access) enable this. This can then assist those who wish to help to facilitate empowerment—whether from the local community, from government, employee associations or development agencies—to recognise what is needed to enhance opportunities for empowerment through tourism.

We hope that other researchers will find this new framework helpful and that they will share their own critical appraisals, applications, and adaptations of it with the scholarly world.

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