

**Analysing the Gender
Dimensions of Tourism
as a Development Strategy**
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Resumen

Los vínculos entre turismo y desarrollo están ampliamente documentados en la literatura científica sobre turismo y la política. Sin embargo, no hay muchas investigaciones que traten de la relación entre turismo, género, y desarrollo. Este trabajo pretende ofrecer una descripción de la dinámica de género dentro de la política del turismo como estrategia de desarrollo. Tomando como foco conceptual el tercer Objetivo de Desarrollo del Milenio (ODM 3) – promover la igualdad entre los sexos y el empoderamiento de la mujer – este documento explora el tema desde una perspectiva crítica informada desde las teorías feministas de desarrollo. A través de la revisión de la literatura existente, el análisis de los documentos de política y la investigación primaria, este trabajo explora el potencial del turismo para contribuir al ODM 3, y las tensiones y contradicciones que implica. Como conclusiones, ofrece unas recomendaciones de política provisionales y sugerencias para investigaciones futuras.

Palabras clave: Igualdad de género, empoderamiento de la mujer, turismo como estrategia de desarrollo, Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio.

Abstract

For several decades, the relationship between tourism and development has been explored in the discipline of tourism studies and in policy-making circles. However, very little research has been carried out into the gender dimensions of this relationship. This paper is a first attempt to unpack some of the issues involved in such an undertaking, and to provide an overview of some of the key empirical areas that need to be taken into account for further research. Using the third Millennium Development Goal – gender equality and women’s empowerment – as its focus, this paper explores this theme from a critical perspective informed by feminist approaches to development. Combining literature reviews, analysis of policy documents and primary research this paper aims to provide an overview of the potential of tourism to contribute to the gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the tensions and complexities that this presents. It concludes by offering some tentative policy recommendations and an agenda for future research.

Key words: Gender equality, Women’s empowerment, Tourism as a development strategy, Millennium Development Goals.

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List of Acronyms

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GAD	Gender and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PPT	Pro-Poor Tourism
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
ST-EP	Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty
WID	Women in Development
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation

1. Introduction

Although highly contested, the links between tourism and development are now well-established in academic and policy circles. Less clear is the potential of tourism to contribute more specifically to the achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3), to 'promote gender equality and empower women'. In order to explore this issue, this paper offers a feminist critique of contemporary tourism development policy. Drawing together extensive research into the gender dimensions of tourism, I set out the tensions between feminist visions of development and tourism development policy. It must be noted at this stage that the links between gender and tourism have been established relatively recently in development policy. As such, this paper is not intended to be a definitive evaluation of these policies, but rather a preliminary exploration of some of the conceptual issues and practical questions that need to be taken into account when looking at this theme. Early critical work on tourism development focussed on how the tourism industry often exploited colonial associations and turned to colonial power structures to promote and construct the industry in developing countries (Perez 1974, 1975; Britton 1982; Nash 1989). In response, tourism studies turned its attention to 'alternative' forms of tourism, suggesting that these were more likely to overcome the exploitative dimensions of mass tourism in developing countries (Lea 1993; Brohman 1996; Khan 1997). Research into the distribution of benefits from alternative forms of tourism suggests there is no automatic connection between 'ecotourism' (Duffy 2004) or 'new tourism' (Mowforth and Munt 2008) and greater equality in tourism destinations. The 'pro-poor tourism' (PPT) approach can be seen as an attempt to take these questions into account and to target the benefits of tourism more directly towards poverty reduction (Brown and Hall 2008). PPT has been extensively debated in the literature, with critics arguing that it serves to facilitate a reinforcement of global inequalities by not taking into account broader power relations of global political economy (Harrison 2008).

While this work on tourism development is useful in understanding changes in tourism development policy, it says little about the specifically gendered aspects of inequality em-

bedded within tourism policy. A well-established tradition of work on gender and tourism has addressed a broad range of issues, case studies and approaches. Scholars within tourism studies have long argued that tourism is a highly gendered industry (Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall 1994; Kinnaird and Hall 1996). As Vivian Kinnaird and Derek Hall argue:

Unless we understand the gendered complexities of tourism, and the power relations they involve, then we fail to recognise the reinforcement and construction of new power relations that are emerging out of tourism processes. From the values and activities of the transnational tourist operator to the differential experiences of individuals participating as either hosts or guests, all parts of the tourism experience are influenced by our collective understanding of the social construction of gender. (Kinnaird and Hall 1996: 100)

In spite of the diversity of research on gender and tourism, strong associations persist in the popular imagination between tourism and prostitution. Indeed, for many, this is the extent of 'gender issues' in tourism. Certainly, the sexual exploitation of women and children is a serious issue that needs to be addressed, and the emerging phenomenon of 'sex tourism' in developing countries has been extensively researched by feminists (Pettman 1997; Jeffreys 1999). However, recent work has suggested that sex tourism should be understood more as a phenomenon of inadequate state provision rather than as an intrinsic feature of tourism in itself (Montgomery 2008). Although this is a controversial argument with which many will disagree, it prompts us to acknowledge the political economy and developmental issues involved when discussing the relationship between tourism and prostitution. Moreover, the assumption that all research into tourism and gender is or should be about sex work and sexual exploitation serves to obscure the more subtle and nuanced aspects of these processes. If we look exclusively at the more obvious and sensationalist areas of 'hyper-exploitation' of women in tourism, many important gender dynamics fall by the wayside.

One such dynamic is the gendered characteristics of tourism work. Feminist research has identified a clear segmentation of men's and women's work in tourism. This shows how the majority of women's work is concentrated in seasonal, part time and low paid activities such as retail, hospitality and cleaning (Sinclair 1997; Chant 1997). Research has also identified the ways in which global gender inequalities are embedded within the promotion and marketing of tourism destinations (Cohen 1995; Marshment 1997; Pritchard and Morgan 2000). However, to date, the majority of this work has focussed on the gendered *outcomes* of tourism development. In contrast, the aim here is to concentrate more specifically on the ways in which tourism development policy is *in itself* gendered.

This paper argues that there are two distinct ways in which gendered assumptions operate in tourism development policy: implicitly (i.e. 'gender-blind') and explicitly (i.e. 'gender-aware'). If we are to understand tourism development policy, I argue, we need to develop an analysis which incorporates both these aspects. We begin by looking at implicit or gender-blind assumptions, demonstrating how macro-level tourism development policy relies on gender inequalities embedded in processes of restructuring of the global economy. This task draws on a wealth of analysis from feminists working within development studies and global political economy, who offer an extensive critique of contemporary development policy and the contradictions and complexities this produces for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Next, the paper turns to analyse the more gender-aware aspects of tourism development policy – that is, policies which openly seek to affect change in gender equality or promote women's empowerment, in line with MDG3. In order to do this I begin by outlining feminist critiques of contemporary development policy, setting out the dominant 'gender paradigm' and the ways in which gender is conceptualised in development institutions. I then go on to offer an overview of gender-aware tourism development policies and projects, exploring gender policy in the World Tourism Organisation and the World Bank, the two most significant global institutions for tourism development. Using policy documents and interviews, I show how the gender aspect of World Bank projects corresponds to the 'gender paradigm' of contemporary development

policy. The final part of the paper offers some tentative conclusions and recommendations around the potential for tourism to contribute to MDG3.

2. 'Gender-blind' tourism development policy

'Development' is not a neutral, benign process but one that takes place within a context of global restructuring, of which gender inequalities are a fundamental component. Although many aspects of tourism development policy do not contain an overt gender component, implicit gendered assumptions are nevertheless present. These assumptions operate in two key ways in development policy. First, macroeconomic development policy assumes that women will 'pick up the slack' of restructuring by continuing to carry out social reproduction work such as parenting and domestic work regardless of external circumstances. Empirical studies in developing countries mapped the ways in which structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s tended to increase and intensify women's reproductive work, while also increasing women's labour force participation, particularly in the informal sphere (Palmer 1992; Çatagay, Elson and Grown 1995). Such restructuring was found to transfer the costs of social reproduction from the state onto private households and communities, where most of the work was taken up by women (Kanji 1991, Chant 2006). Others concluded that the drastic cutbacks in state services and subsidies through development policy had led to a 'triple burden' (Momsen 1991) – of reproductive work, community responsibility, and paid work - for women. More recently, feminists have shown how social reproduction is being 'reprivatised' by the global restructuring of production (Bakker 2003), leading to an 'increasing emphasis on individual responsibility for, and informalization of, social reproduction' (Bakker and Silvey 2008: 8). In developing countries, this has meant that 'much of the care burden has inevitably fallen back on women and girls' (Razavi 2007: 1).

The second gender-blind assumption of macroeconomic development policy involves the gendered inequalities which are integral to global production. A long tradition of research into women workers in the export-oriented economy outlines the global gendered

division of labour (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). Such research has explored women's work in a variety of sectors, including garment factories (Elias 2004), home-based work (Prügl 1999; Kantor 2003), domestic service (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003) and the service sector in general (Guy and Newman 2004; McDowell et al. 2005). Other studies include Carolynne Dennis' research on women's self-employment in Nigeria, showing how the SAPs of the 1980s made it more difficult for women to enter the most profitable parts of the informal sector due to the male bias in the growth of industrial employment, while at the same time increasing women's need for such access (Dennis 1995). In her research on *maquiladora* (factories in export processing zones) workers in Mexico's export processing zones - an industrial expansion hailed as being beneficial to women - Ruth Pearson argued that although Mexico's share of technical, managerial and administration jobs has increased, these opportunities had not been made available to Mexican women (Pearson 1995). Collectively, this work demonstrates the ways in which gendered - and ethnic - inequalities are 'central to the functioning of the global political economy' (Elias 2004: 27).

In summary, as Shirin Rai (2004: 583) argues:

... (P)articipants come to specific markets with 'unequal' capabilities and bargaining capacities and resources, as a result of and which inhere in unequal market structures, regulated and stabilized by gendered state formations, and characterized by more or less unequal power. Class and gender are two bases for unequal power relations operating in the market.

So what does this mean in terms of tourism? What does implicitly gendered (or gender-blind) tourism development policy look like? The assumptions outlined above are manifested in tourism development policy at the macroeconomic level. The primary example of this is the extensive promotion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in developing countries' tourism sectors. Employment in global hotel chains is notorious for poor working conditions, as documented extensively in the tourism studies literature. However, these conditions become even starker when looked at through the lens of gender. The tourism industry is characterised by 'the seasonal nature

of many of its activities and (by) important fluctuations even in normal periods'. These features of the industry create a 'generic tendency to operate on the basis of a core staff and to employ the labour needed for day-to-day operations under atypical contractual arrangements' (ILO 2001: 48). This involves maintaining a large pool of temporary labour to be drawn upon in times of high demand, made up of predominantly young and/or female workers. Other features of the tourism industry include high staff turnover, long working hours, subcontracting, 'flexible' working conditions, the prevalence of 'casual workers' and seasonal variations in employment (ILO 2001: 56-63).

In gender terms, the ILO reports that women account for 46 per cent of workers in wage employment in tourism globally. However, expanding the definition to include catering and accommodation brings the proportion of female labour up to 90 per cent. To quote the report in detail:

They [women] occupy the lower levels of the occupational structure in the tourism labour market, with few career development opportunities and low levels of remuneration (some estimates suggest that wages for women are up to 20 per cent lower than those for men). The greater incidence of unemployment among women is attributed to their low skill levels and their low social status in many poor countries. They also tend to be the first affected when labour retrenchment occurs as a result of recession or adjustment to new technology. It should also be noted that the majority of workers in subcontracted, temporary, casual or part-time employment are women (ILO 2001: 74).

Any analysis of the gender dimensions of macroeconomic tourism development policy that promotes FDI by large tourism companies needs to take into account the structural gendered features of work in tourism. M. Thea Sinclair (1997) argues that work in tourism should be understood as a reflection of wider inequalities in the tourism industry. She points to the fact that the fun and escapism enjoyed by tourists depend on the labour provided by workers in the tourism industry. However, these power relations need to be

analysed carefully, as there are not only divisions between tourists and workers in terms of income and wealth, but also *between* workers, primarily along gender but also race lines. Such inequalities between workers, she argues, affect the relative income, status and power of those involved, resulting in a clear segmentation of men's and women's work in tourism, the majority of women's work being concentrated in seasonal, part time and low paid activities such as retail, hospitality and cleaning (Sinclair 1997). Sylvia Chant (1997) also points to the gendered nature of work in tourism:

Female recruitment in formal sector enterprises catering for international tourists tends to draw heavily on male-constructed and male-biased gender stereotypes and to place women in occupations which in many respects crystallise and intensify their subordinate positions in society, whether through their assignation to low-level, behind-the-scenes domestic work as laundrywomen or chambermaids, or to jobs where their physical attributes are used to attract men or to gratify male sexual needs, as in front-line hotel, commercial and restaurant posts and in entertainment establishments (Chant 1997: 161).

Multinational hotel chains have been criticised as setting a precedent for flexibilised, low-skill labour with little room for mobility and promotion of staff (ILO 2001). However, in many ways this is also true of smaller organisations such as 'boutique' hotels employing between 20 and 100 staff. Likewise in small, 'family-run' enterprises those employees who make up the main body of the workforce do not tend to see much social mobility in their jobs (Sinclair 1997a). As such, there is strong evidence that tourism employment generated through FDI promotion is unlikely to greater gender inequality, and indeed may exacerbate inequalities.

2.1. OUTCOMES OF 'GENDER-BLIND' TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY

In spite of the structural gendered inequalities of work in tourism, feminists have always been acutely aware of the ways in which women's entry into the paid workforce tends to have

contradictory and complex effects on gender relations and the lives of women workers (Tinker 2006). Analyses of women's work in the global economy offer a framework for analysing these tensions. As Chant (2002: 550) argues, 'the emancipatory prospects of female labour force participation are constrained by the prejudicial terms under which women enter the workforce'. Diane Elson and Pearson (1998: 199), in a discussion of women's work in export processing zone factories, identify a 'tendency to *intensify* the existing forms of gender subordination; a tendency to *decompose* existing forms of gender subordination; and a tendency to *recompose* new forms of gender subordination' (emphasis added). Processes of tourism development have involved similarly complex challenges to traditional gendered power relations, as will be outlined below.

In many ways, tourism development has had a radical impact on gender relations in destination countries. As Chant argues, despite the structural inequalities of women's participation in tourism production, such work has some benefits for the empowerment of women workers: the bringing together of women in such a way, she argues, has the potential to lead to women tourism workers 'acting by themselves, for themselves, to demand fairer treatment in the workplace, the home, and in wider society' (Chant 1997: 164-5). Sinclair (1997a) similarly points to some of the increased benefits of work in tourism for women – for example, she argues that such work can lead to greater status in the household and consequently increased bargaining power in the household context. In the words of Irene Tinker, such changes can be interpreted as 'empowerment just happened'. Global socio-economic transformations of the last twenty years have led to a shift in gender relations by undermining 'subsistence and traditional farming communities, altering the sexual division of labor and opening cracks in the foundations of patriarchal control' (Tinker 2006: 270). In my own research, many women workers in the tourism industry in Central America discussed how they felt working in tourism contributed to their personal and economic empowerment. They talked about how male control over household income had been diminished by the many opportunities for women to earn money in tourism communities. Others enjoyed the interaction with people from around the world, in particular being exposed to different gender norms such as women travelling alone

or men taking primary responsibility for child-care.¹ However, these benefits tend not to be accompanied by wider influence in society, due to the dominant ideology of the 'normal' household structure, and the absence of women's control over local decision-making.

In summary, the implicit or gender-blind assumptions of macroeconomic tourism development policy which has promoted FDI in the context of global restructuring has led to a series of complex and sometimes contradictory outcomes for gender equality and women's empowerment. Although tourism work is highly stratified by gender due to the kinds of labour it requires and the ways in which such labour is to be performed, to some extent it can be argued to have contributed to economic and personal empowerment. However, it is less clear whether such individual gains have been translated into broader social and political influence in society. A large body of literature exists to analyse these tensions, and can help us understand the implicit or gender-blind assumptions of tourism development policy and how these map onto broader questions about gender equality and women's empowerment. We now move on to discuss the more explicit gender dimensions of tourism development policy.

3. Feminist approaches to gender and development policy

In order to explore the gender dimensions of tourism policy, it is useful first to set the context within which such policy is made. I begin by offering an historical literature review on feminist critiques of development, before setting out more clearly how this can be applied to contemporary tourism development policy. The debates summarised here are well-rehearsed in the field of gender and development. However, it is worth going into some detail here in order to contextualise contemporary issues for those who may not be familiar with this body of literature. The point here is to demonstrate that the inclusion of 'gender' within a development policy is not unproblematic. That is, there is no straight-forward relationship between making 'gender' more

visible in development policy and gender equality and empowerment outcomes.

The seminal work of this kind is Ester Bose-rup's *Women's Role in Economic Development*, in which she argued that women had been left out of development policies and as such their needs had been marginalised (Boserup 1970). Building on this argument, the women in development (WID) approach aimed to include women in development policy in order to decrease inequalities between women and men (Tinker 1976). Working largely from a liberal feminist perspective, early work in the WID field argued that the solution to gender inequality lay in widening women's access to tools, technology and education. The most effective way of achieving women's integration into the development process, such writers argued, was through increased access to employment and entry into the marketplace (Rogers 1980).

General disillusionment in the late 1970s with the supposed 'trickle-down' effect of the modernisation approach to development encouraged a rethink of approaches, giving rise to the 'anti-poverty' approach of WID which argued that low-income women should be identified as a vulnerable group in need of particular attention from development planners (Waylen 1996: 39). The solutions proposed were based mainly around income-generating projects for women, making no analytical connection between women's reproductive roles and the links between the reproductive and productive economy (Waylen 1996; Rai 2002). WID feminists did not offer a radical critique of the modernisation approach to development and remained within the paradigm of modernisation theory, using insights from liberal feminism to inform their critique of development policy and outcomes (Kabeer 1994). As summarised by Jaquette and Staudt (2006: 46), the WID view 'was that women were excluded from or discriminated against in markets and that they would act entrepreneurially if they had even minimal resources to do so'.

Socialist feminists in the 1980s argued that the WID paradigm failed to take into account the exploitation involved in the spread of capitalist social relations, of which they identified gender inequality as a fundamental component (Benería and Sen 1981). Studies from a gender and development (GAD) perspective concentrated on global processes of the spread of capitalism and the impact of such processes on

¹ Interviews with women tourism workers in Costa Rica, Honduras and Belize carried out between September 2005 and April 2006.

inequality. The focus was also turned away from *women* as a group to the more overtly political category of *gender* and *gender relations*, centring more explicitly on power relations (Waylen 1996, Rai 2002). Caroline Moser (1989) argued for a re-focussing on gendered power relations in the study of development in order to challenge gender roles and tackle macroeconomic issues from an overtly feminist perspective. This shift to a discussion of gender relations and inequality was not merely a theoretical shift, but should also be understood as a response to changes in the international system such as the introduction of the neoliberal development paradigm and the emerging era of democratisation (Jaquette and Staudt 2006).

Early work in the field of GAD involved studies that traced the links between the household and the broader international context. Maria Mies (1982, 1986), for example, analysed the links between processes of informalisation and 'housewifisation' in the global economy. In their article on 'nimble fingers', Elson and Pearson (1981) noted how gender inequalities were exploited by firms looking for fast, obedient workers. Much of this early socialist feminist work was criticised by feminists in developing countries working from a post-colonial perspective, who argued that the work of 'First World' feminists portrayed poor women as victims and failed to see how racial hierarchies intersected with gender hierarchies to produce historically and culturally specific forms of oppression that GAD analysts could not account for (Mohanty 1988, Lim 1990). As such, it was argued that early GAD work was overly deterministic in its approach, not allowing for the agency of women in developing countries. In many ways the rise of the postcolonial feminist critique of development can be seen as part of a wider process of the diminishing influence of materialist explanations of gender inequality (Jaquette and Staudt 2006). Work such as that of Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart (1995) began to question notions of GAD from a more postcolonial perspective, exploring ideas about the role of language and discourse in development theory and policy.

In policy terms, the shift to the gender and development paradigm manifested itself most strongly in terms of commitments to gender-mainstreaming by international institutions (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002). In spite of

this, some feminists have argued that the radical terminology of the GAD critique has often been used interchangeably with the more (neo)liberal aspects of the WID perspective (Pearson 1999). For example, Rai (2002: 73) argues for a re-focussing of feminist development work on relations of production and accumulation in order to avoid the 'co-optation' of feminist language and politics in development policy and practice. The point here is that the relationship between feminist academic analysis and gender policy in development is highly contentious, and reiterates the point that policy commitments to 'gender' need to be critically analysed if we are to understand their potential to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

More recently, commitments to GAD and gender-mainstreaming have been somewhat overshadowed by the introduction of MDG3 as the primary reference point for gender policy in development. In many ways, MDG3 can be seen as a less radical goal than its forerunner – the Beijing Platform for Action, which established gender-mainstreaming – as it does not make links between economic restructuring and gender inequality. It is important to note that the target associated with goal three (promote gender equality and empower women) is to 'eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015'. As Elias and Ferguson (2007) argue, the MDGs sanction an approach in which:

'(a) gender issues are reduced to easily quantifiable measures of economic efficiency (or 'human capital' development) and (b) 'gender mainstreaming' has been effectively replaced by a development agenda that views gender issues in a much more limited sense.'

One institution that has received a high level of attention from feminist academics and activists is the World Bank. Since the emergence of the 'post Washington consensus' in the late 1990s, the emphasis on poverty alleviation (or 'pro-poor growth') has had a significant impact on gender equality policies and programmes within the Bank. Contemporary feminist work has argued that this attempt to combine a 'gender-friendly' approach to poverty reduction whilst maintaining a commitment to neoliberal structural adjustment is ultimately limiting (Perrons 2005, Griffin 2006, Bergeron

2001). The problem for some feminists with the overarching interest in poverty reduction is that it is characterised by a lack of any discussion concerning the links between economic growth, development and macroeconomic policy changes and the perpetuation of gender inequality.

Alongside commitments to poverty reduction, the second central component to Bank gender policy – consistent since the 1970s – is the firm belief that employment and income-generation should be understood as the foundation of empowerment for women (Bedford 2003). This commitment to economic empowerment for women manifests itself in various ways in contemporary World Bank policy. Despite an official change in rhetoric from WID to GAD, in practice gender policy in the Bank has meant getting more women into paid work. In recent World Bank publications on gender and the MDGs, it is clear that gender inequality is viewed not so much as a problem in itself, but rather as a barrier to economic development and poverty reduction. The most recent substantive statement of gender policy within the Bank is *Gender Equality as Smart Economics*, which aims to increase World Bank Group work to empower women economically.² As argued above in the critique of MDG3, this programme fits within a somewhat ‘instrumentalist’ understanding of the relationship between gender equality and development. As the report clearly states:

Studies show that when women are given economic opportunity, the benefits are also large for their families, their communities, and ultimately for national development efforts. Opening economic opportunities for women puts poverty reduction on a faster track and steps up progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, which include the eradication of poverty and hunger by 2015 (World Bank 2007: 5).

As such, the key paradigm for gender policy within the Bank can be understood to have two fundamental objectives: to empower women *economically* (without any discussion of broader notions of empowerment); and to

2 ‘At A Glance: Gender Equality as Smart Economics’, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/0,,contentMDK:21983335~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:336868,00.html>

do this in order to more efficiently achieve other poverty reduction goals. This overview of gender and development policy demonstrates the tensions and conflicts over the meaning and deployment of ‘gender’. We now turn to an analysis of how these debates can be applied more specifically to tourism development policy.

4. ‘Gender-aware’ tourism development policy

As set out above, gender policy in development is made in a somewhat de-politicised environment, where many of the more radical aspects of the feminist agenda have been obscured or marginalised (Cornwall et al. 2007). This is the context in which tourism development policy is made. As such, we should not expect the gender content of tourism development policy to easily overcome these constraints, and should bear this in mind when analysing its potential to contribute to MDG3. The discussion above demonstrated how making ‘gender’ visible in development policy does not necessarily lead to gender equality and women’s empowerment. The aim here is therefore to explore how these tensions and issues play out in the context of tourism development. There is no globally-agreed policy statement on tourism and MDG3. Nevertheless, some bilateral donors have demonstrated a commitment to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through tourism. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funds a number of projects which integrate gender and tourism, along with other aspects such as reproductive health.³ In Honduras, for example, JICA gender specialists have provided awareness-raising and confidence-building training for indigenous women making handicrafts and other products for the tourism industry.⁴ Also in Honduras, Norwegian funding and expertise was directed towards a feasibility study on the potential for tourism to contribute to gender equality (World Bank 2003). However, such examples are sporadic at best and suggest that the links between gender and tourism have not been explicitly made in bilateral institutions. As such, we now look at two global institutions in turn – the World Tourism Organisation and

3 http://www.jica.go.jp/english/operations/thematic_issues/gender/
4 Interviews with tourism development practitioners in Honduras carried out in May 2008

the World Bank – in order to analyse the content and focus of their gender and tourism policy.

4.1. THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION

One institution we might expect to provide some guidance on gender equality issues is the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). However, despite being a United Nations specialised agency, the UNWTO has been comparatively slow on the uptake with gender-mainstreaming compared with other global institutions. Although the Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) programme has been well-established since 2002, gender equality objectives have never been an explicit component of this. Indeed, gender as a concept was not widely used in the organisation until 2007. Within the institution, gender falls within the remit of ‘Cultural, Social and Ethical Aspects of Tourism’ department, where it is just one of several areas the small team is concerned with, along with migration, human rights, non-discrimination and the protection of children. As such, there are limited resources with which to develop and promote a strong gender agenda. Nevertheless, those within the UNWTO with a concern for gender issues managed to take advantage of the theme of World Tourism Day 2007: ‘Tourism Opens Doors for Women’ in order to raise the profile of gender issues in the institution. As part of this event, a roundtable involving a broad range of participants was held with the express purpose of exploring the relationship between this theme and the MDGs, setting up a work agenda for the future.

Following on from this, a further UNWTO Forum in Berlin in March 2008 explored the theme of Women in Tourism. The Action Plan to Empower Women through Tourism developed during the Forum includes the following objectives:

- Establish a multi-stakeholder taskforce;
- Put in place of a data collection system, including desk research and case studies;
- Initiate a biennial UNWTO-UNIFEM report on the situation of women in tourism;

- Expand the website www.tourismgender.com into a PORTAL to serve as a global knowledge sharing e-network;
- Build international awareness about opportunities for women in tourism;
- Call upon UNWTO members to take vigorous steps to support gender mainstreaming in national development processes so as to achieve women’s equality in the tourism sector;
- Foster a network of activists, ambassadors and advocates and experts in gender issues from around the world’.⁵

Of particular interest amongst these activities is the Women in Tourism Taskforce. The first activity of this Taskforce is a project aimed at women working in five star hotels in developing countries, offering education, human resources and decent training for women. The Taskforce will work with hotel chains and local NGOs in order to teach basic skills in order to boost women’s confidence in other aspects of their lives.⁶ However, in spite of these initiatives the only clear over-arching policy statement from the UNWTO is the institution’s ‘triple commitment’ to the MDGs. These are outlined as follows: that tourism should benefit the poor; promote the protection of the environment; and support the empowerment of women.⁷ As such, it is too early to make any in-depth analyses of UNWTO gender policy. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to keep a close watch on these activities and they will merit future research in order to explore the ways the institution grapples with the complex issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

4.2. THE WORLD BANK

Tourism development policy in the World Bank has in recent years moved beyond macroeconomic strategies of FDI promotion and employment generation. Tourism features as a

5 UNWTO Press Release: Empowering Women Through Tourism, Madrid, 31st March 2008, available at <http://www.unwto.org/aboutwto/how/en/how.php?op=4>

6 This analysis is based on interviews with staff from the World Tourism Organisation, Madrid, June 2009 and September 2009

7 Report of UNWTO’s Women in Tourism Forum, 7th March 2008, available at http://www.unwto.org/sdt/fields/en/pdf/itb2008_WomenInTourism_rep.pdf

focal sector in 90 per cent of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the key framework documents for donor support (UNWTO 2005: 12). Hawkins and Mann (2007) note that the Bank's total portfolio of tourism funding amounts to US\$3.5 billion spanning ninety four ongoing projects. They identify four stages in the World Bank's approach to tourism: 'macrodevelopment' (1969-1979); 'disengagement' (1980-1990); 'sustainable development' (1991-1999) and 'microdevelopment' (2000-2006). A key tourism policy shift has taken place from macro-economic concerns towards micro-economic analysis:

The Bank uses the analytical lens of tourism to explore barriers and constraints (...) to investment, to examine micro-policy reform, to decentralize institutional structures, and to promote public-private partnerships. (...) This approach is leading to important and more focused micro-level and policy interventions that are targeted at outcomes like raising the livelihoods of local people (Hawkins and Mann 2007: 358).

This research is useful in understanding the way the Bank's overall approach to tourism development has been reoriented towards micro-economic and poverty reduction or 'pro-poor' objectives. However, it tells us little about how gender is conceptualised within this new approach. Although no single document exists to outline the Bank's approach, several projects identify an explicit link between tourism and gender equality or empowerment. We outline four of these here, paying particular attention to a project in Copán, Honduras, on which extensive primary research was carried out by the author. These projects are firmly embedded within the World Bank's gender paradigm set out above, which sanctions women's integration into the productive market economy as the primary route to empowerment.

The 'Transfrontier Conservation Areas and Tourism Development' project in Mozambique is cited in a World Bank list of 'gender and rural development' projects so is useful in understanding the paradigm of gender and tour-

ism policy.⁸ The Project Appraisal Document states that:

Tourism, natural resource management and small enterprise development are all areas that offer particular opportunities for employment, income and participation by women. In cooperation with NGOs, the Government is also supporting women's associations that assist women household heads with weak economic capacity (World Bank 2005: 132).

As such, the 'gender' component of this project is reduced to creating opportunities for women's economic empowerment. Although listed as a showcase project for gender and rural development, questions of equality and empowerment are not present in the project documentation. In Bolivia, a tourism development project for Lake Titicaca includes a 'gender' component. It aims to 'promote actions aimed at improving gender equity and improve opportunities for Aymarh women' (World Bank 2007a: 98). However, there is little exploration of how this might be done and what this might mean in practice.

A recently approved 'Sustainable Tourism Development' project in Ethiopia (June 2009) is more explicit in its understandings of gender, which suggests that the links between tourism development and gender may be becoming more prominent in World Bank work. The Project Appraisal Document offers more details about how women are to be involved:

In Axum the social issues are largely around the planned activity of (i) enhancing the town square as a social arena (e.g. cafes and souvenir outlets managed by locals) and (ii) restoring some traditional houses possibly to transform them into small lodges run by community-based entrepreneurs who could also benefit from the matching grant scheme. It is desirable that a particular attention be given to vulnerable groups such as women and the youth so as to generate employment and incomes for them (World Bank 2009: 33).

8 <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARD/Resources/agand-genderprojectsfinal.pdf?resourceurlname=agandgender-projects-final.pdf>

The construction of Ethiopian women as a 'vulnerable group' is interesting here, as it clearly casts women as victims in need of the 'help' of tourism development. The only solution offered to overcome such vulnerability is generating employment and incomes. In practical terms, it is suggested that 'these groups' be given priority in jobs in the new tourism site in areas such as 'ticket sales, parking attendants, guides etc.' (World Bank 2009: 33). Again, understandings of gender within this project are firmly embedded with the economic empowerment approach set out above.

One project in particular is being hailed as a success story for tourism development's potential to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. The 'Regional Development in the Copán Valley' project in Honduras included 'gender' as a key component from the outset. I deal with this topic in greater detail in a forthcoming article (Ferguson 2010), yet some key points are worth emphasising here in order to understand in more detail the World Bank's approach. As might be expected, rather than addressing issues of inequality in development outcomes and processes, the *Valle de Copán* project focuses on the potential of tourism to generate the conditions for 'marginal groups' (women, young people and old people) to *access the opportunities* afforded by tourism. Women's participation in handicraft production for the tourism market is perceived by development workers as a method by which women's groups can be integrated into the market as well as offering a tourist attraction to potential visitors to rural communities, which at the same time is said to enhance cultural awareness and local conditions. Tourism in this sense is understood as an economic activity that can integrate women into the economy, which in turn allows them to contribute to the family economy and strengthen their personal development.

This conceptualisation of gender equality fits broadly within the World Bank paradigm outlined above. The primary understanding of gender policy within the project is that it relates to women in their roles as producers of tourism goods and services. In general, support and assistance for these productive activities is what constitutes the gender component of policy.⁹ As such, issues of gender equality

are left out of the picture as equality of opportunity and participation are the goals of policy. Women receiving training in Honduras through the Copán Valley project argued that such training did not take into account broader issues within their lives. For example, although women may receive training in basic accounting and marketing skills, wider issues of concern to them were not addressed.¹⁰

Women's integration into the tourism market through World Bank projects is being pursued with little awareness of the significant barriers to participation faced by women working on tourism microenterprise projects. Research on the outcomes of gender and tourism projects is scarce, predominantly because of the relative newness of the phenomenon. As such, a summary of the gendered outcomes of the Copán project will have to serve as a guide here. First, as argued above, the outcomes of tourism development on gender relations in tourism destinations are complex and uneven. Just because the World Bank project did not take a radical view in its 'gender component', that does not mean it did not provide opportunities for local women to challenge gendered power relations. Even activities such as women travelling from rural villages into town to attend workshops and events caused a disruption of traditional power relations. Likewise, the granting of sums of money to groups of women to set up their own businesses had a significant impact on rural communities and challenged the ways that both women and men perceived and performed traditional gender roles.

The aim here is certainly not to say that World Bank tourism development funding is unable to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women in tourism destinations. Indeed, in many ways the effects of such funding on gender relations have been significant. The point is that more radical starting points and more feminist expertise at all stages of gender and tourism development policy could offer greater potential to move beyond narrow understandings of economic empowerment. I now turn to some reflecting points on what this might mean for future gender and tourism policy, and what kinds of research might be needed to support this.

9 Interviews with practitioners on the World Bank project, Honduras, December 2005 and May 2008

10 Interviews with indigenous women who participated in the World Bank project, Honduras, December 2005

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has taken a critical approach to the relationship between tourism and MDG3. By exploring both implicit and explicit gendered assumptions embedded in tourism development policy, the paper has highlighted some of the tensions and complexities of this issue. A key criticism of current policy is that very limited notions of women's empowerment – that is, economic empowerment – are used to justify and legitimise these policies. As Chant (2006: 101) argues, access to material resources is 'unlikely to have a significant impact on women's empowerment without changes in other social, cultural, and legal structures of gender inequality'. There is no necessary correlation between an increase in resources and the redress of power relations (Kabeer 1999). As such, it can be concluded from the research that economic empowerment as experienced by many women in tourism development communities does not tend to translate into meaningful a redress of power relations beyond a relative improvement in economic conditions. That is, empowerment *through the market* remains empowerment *in the market*, to the exclusion of more wide-reaching societal change. Although tourism development may reconstitute gendered power relations in narrow economic (or market) terms, in reality the broader power structures of inequality across society remain profoundly gender-biased, a pattern which is in many ways not only reinforced but also fuelled by processes of tourism development.

However, such a critical perspective is not necessarily the most fruitful way of opening channels of debate and exchange with policy-makers and development practitioners. In an attempt to do this in a constructive manner, I offer some tentative guidelines or recommendations for channelling the potential benefits of tourism more effectively towards achieving MDG3. First, the promotion of tourism as a macroeconomic development strategy for

poorer countries could be carried out with a more explicit understanding of the gendered implications of this policy. Extensive research exists into the unequal ways in which tourism work is structured. As such, tourism companies should be held to account for their gender policies (whether explicit or implicit) in order to provide more opportunities for promotion and training for women workers and to redress the historical imbalances in tourism work. Second, there could be a more open debate in tourism policy circles about the politics of women's empowerment and gender equality. This would allow gender and tourism policy to move beyond narrow, market-based conceptualisations and to present more creative and innovative ways of achieving MDG3. Third, policy-makers could pay more attention to feminist analyses of tourism development. We need to move beyond generalised statements about the contribution of tourism to MDG3 and begin to explore the practical ways in which this relationship can be operationalised. This would require the involvement of feminist academics and practitioners at all stages of the tourism policy process – including implementation – to ensure that such policies retain a political commitment to broad notions of gender equality and women's empowerment.

As demonstrated in this paper, research into the nexus between tourism and MDG3 is currently limited. The guidelines above are tentative precisely because of the lack of detailed, analytical research in this area. This would benefit from further research in a number of priority areas: the outcomes of World Bank gender and tourism projects; gender and tourism policy in bilateral and regional funding agencies; and UNWTO's emerging gender agenda. Also, more research into grassroots feminist tourism projects across the world – such as the *Zona Franja* tourism and women's empowerment project in Nicaragua – would offer alternative ways of understanding gender and tourism, and provide inspiration for creative and progressive ways of harnessing tourism to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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