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Producing tourism policy, democracy and marginalised local communities

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Abstract

Despite four decades of tourism expansion and a rapid economic growth, the (wider) development conditions of local island communities have barely progressed in the Maldives. If tourism development is a vehicle for development and a means to achieve sustainable development, it is important to understand and question why local communities are unable to reap the benefits of tourism, in terms of economic development, and participate in national decision-making processes. This thesis brings together historical dimensions, with broader social, political, and economic processes to examine the underlying power-relations in the production of tourism development policies. In the process, the fundamental reasons for marginalisation of local communities are exposed. This analysis develops the concept of inclusive tourism development, within a SIDS context, to address this issue. The aim of study is to examine the production of tourism policy in the Maldives which has systematically marginalised and excluded local community from economic development. The research centres on a case study approach of analysing planning and policy formulation at three separate atolls in the Maldives: Kaafu Atoll, Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alifu Atoll and three distinct periods in history. This thesis argues for the importance of deliberative democracy as a platform for realising the potential of tourism development in small island settings in the early 21st century.

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List of Abbreviations

4TMP	Fourth Tourism Master Plan
ADC	Atoll Development Committee
BAARU	Baa Atoll Resorts United
BPT	Business Profit Tax
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DTFI	Department of Tourism and Foreign Investment
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessments
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
FTMP	First Tourism Master Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GST	Goods and Services Tax
IDC	Island Development Committee
LGA	Local Government Authority
MATI	Maldives Association of Tourism Industry
MDP	Maldives Democratic Party
MGBS	Maldives Government Business Service
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MVR	Maldivian Ruffiya
NDP	National Development Plan

P4D	Partnering for Development
PPT	Pro-poor tourism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STMP	Second Tourism Master Plan
TDP	Tourism Development Process
TEAM	Tourism Employees Association of Maldives
TTMP	Third Tourism Master Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WDC	Women's Development Committee

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In Small Island Developing States (SIDS) tourism development has become the fundamental pillar in national economic planning and economic development. There is a general agreement amongst development scholars that tourism plays a critical role in the social and economic development of small islands developing countries (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008a; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008b; Solà, Moraleda, & Mazón, 2012). However, beyond the usual economic cost–benefit analysis and normative models, the notion of “tourism for development” has been identified as lacking theoretical or practical frameworks for explaining how it contributes to “development” (Fayos-Solà, Álvarez, & Cooper, 2014). Fayos-Solà et al (2014) argue that, there is lack of critical understanding of the consequences on the developing countries beyond economic growth and its benefits to the national account. Some recent studies have highlighted how tourism development in SIDS such as the Maldives could bring about changes to the natural environment at the expense of local communities and natural processes (Kothari & Arnall, 2017).

Over the years, tourism development has been promoted under various banners such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism, and more precisely as a vehicle for development (Sharpley, 2015). It has been argued that tourism brings employment, foreign exchange and generates revenue to the government to support infrastructure development and social welfare (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). To support such development, international agencies and multinational corporations have played a critical role in providing foreign investment, aid and technical assistance to learn from the international best practices. They have also set up various institutions that would support its development under different phases of master planning (Sharpley, 2015). Within a neoliberal global setting promoted by international agencies and funded by multinational corporations in various planning stages, natural resources, such as island and lagoons in the Maldives were aggressively neoliberalised, for further accumulation (Shakeela, Ruhanen, & Breakey, 2011; Zubair, Bowen, & Elwin, 2011). Such a transformation has had unforeseen negative consequences on the local community that needs to be studied. It is not the contention of this study to argue that tourism development under the influence of neoliberalism was solely responsible for such outcomes, rather it shows internal factors such

as historical, cultural and power-relations play a key role in forging the transformation of tourism development brought to developing countries. More recently, Saarinen, Rogerson, and Hall (2017, p. 307) have argued the need to

“recognize distinct contextual and historical dimensions around the geographies of tourism development and planning in versatile research contexts. These historic and contextual elements influence the present and future characteristics and power relations of tourism in place and can help us to understand how tourism works with localities and localities with tourism.”

These elements of influence tilted the power balance to multinational corporations allowing local elites to carve out institutions and processes that lead to the marginalisation of local communities from participating in tourism development. Similarly Kothari and Arnall (2017) examined tourism development of the Maldives, and focusing on two islands in South Kaafu Atoll provided empirical evidence of “how interventions by tourism managers can result in conflict with local people who, possessing different imaginaries, interests and priorities, may have their own, often long-established, uses of the environment undermined in the process” (Kothari & Arnall, 2017, p. 981). There is no question that all these works have gradually given way to the beginning of a new scholarship into tourism development, local communities and the intertwined political forces that produced unequal relationship between the tourism sector and these local communities.

Despite waves of tourism-led social transformation, the outcome for local community development has proven disappointing. Tourism development policy processes, institutions and current practices have resulted in the unequal distribution of benefits and power (Bramwell & Meyer, 2007; Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015; Reed, 1997; Scheyvens, 1999; Thompson-Carr, 2016), dispossession (Fabinyi, 2010; Lee, Hampton, & Jeyacheya, 2015), and displacement (Kothari, 2014), as well as placing local communities in environmentally disadvantageous positions (Kothari & Arnall, 2017; Saarinen, 2016b; Stonich, 1998). Much of the literature has focused on using normative models to explore planning process and its implications on host communities. Few studies have deployed holistic approaches that consider linkages among social, political, economic and environmental processes within different historical contexts to examine the impact of tourism development on marginalised local communities. This multi-

layered and holistic approach is especially important in examining tourism development in SIDS. The political ecology approach used in this study further emphasises environmental concerns and offers a “situated method for unpacking the problems and potentials of sustainable tourism in the context of people, nature, and power” (Douglas, 2014, p. 8). Situating tourism development policies and local communities within their historical and political context, a political ecology framework promises to uncover insights into the tensions, conflicts and issues limiting participation in tourism development and thus constraining both sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

1.2 Problem Statement

To date, there has been insufficient research examining the connection between tourism development policy processes, process of democratisation and the marginalisation of local communities. The specific contextual and historical dimensions that contribute to explaining power-relations and factors that influence the level of political participation of these communities has been overlooked. In the case of the Maldives, little effort has been made to understand why four decades of rapid, tourism-driven economic growth has fundamentally transformed most aspects of Maldivian society but has had little positive impact on social development in local island communities. If tourism development is a vehicle for development and a means to achieve sustainable development, local communities should also benefit from tourism. But such opportunities remain hindered by major barriers to participate in decision making over the tourism development policies and equal employment opportunities within the sector. Further, it is evident that such barriers become worsened by the lack of access to natural resources that these communities share with tourist resorts. In this thesis, I explore the extent to which lack of local-level participation in decision making is responsible for this development failure. The research demonstrates how local communities have been marginalised from decision making from the beginning and have had little opportunity to participate directly in tourism development and voice their concerns about the rapid expansion of the sector and the directions it has taken. As a result, the current form of tourism development in the Maldives is undermining its potential to lead an inclusive and effective development process and the prospects for a democratic society more widely.

Historically, few studies have recognised the existence and implications of this sort of imbalance of power in tourism development in SIDS. More recently, however, scholars have begun to explore levels of community participation, how they are structured into wider power relations, and how participation (and its absence) has affected outcomes for local communities. This case study of the Maldives shows how powerful elites have influenced the production of tourism development policies that have then shaped the participation of local communities in tourism and controlled the distribution of costs and benefits. The study outlines the broad social, political and economic context of tourism development in the Maldives and how specific local communities have been positioned within this development programme. It argues for a more inclusive tourism development model that includes community participation in decision making so as to enhance benefits for local communities in a SIDS context. The study contributes to both the theoretical and applied field of tourism development.

In this thesis, I argue that if local communities are not given opportunities to participate and reap the benefits of tourism development and its expansion, they become increasingly marginalised which constrains them socially, economically, politically and unsettles democratic processes.

1.3 Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine the production of tourism development policies processes which allowed for the systematic marginalisation and exclusion of local communities in the Maldives from economic development opportunities. Using concepts of power and participation as found in theories of political ecology, the study examines how the current system could facilitate and transform into inclusive tourism development. The overall research question was:

How has production of tourism policy in the Maldives systematically marginalised and excluded local communities from economic development opportunities, and to what effect?

Sub-questions are:

1. How have the various power-relations and influences from the pre-tourism era produced an elite-based tourism development. (Chapter 5)

2. How and what way has the democratic processes worked in the contemporary period of tourism planning and policy formulation. (Chapter 6)
3. What are the various forms of participation available for island communities in tourism development in the three atoll communities and what are their limitations? (Chapter 7 and 8)

The study aims to understand how various power-relations became entangled in the development of an elite-based tourism development; how, and in what ways, the national democratisation process that followed failed to address issues of inequality and marginalisation through tourism planning; and finally, how various forms of participation available to local communities have been ignored or overturned through the tourism development process (TDP). The thesis argues that tourism development policies and institutions must accommodate community practices, and social institutions if local communities are to participate effectively in decision making and benefit from tourism development. Failure to facilitate effective and socially appropriate participation will undermine the normative goals of development. Similarly, any tourism development model must consider the impact of tourism activities on the environment and how such environmental factors in turn impact upon the community and cultural practices of local communities. This thesis will argue that these concerns have been systematically ignored in the Maldives, where pre-tourism era socio-political structures have enabled the transfer of power from a social elitist base structure to a new group of tourism elites who have designed and implemented tourism policies to benefit them at the expense of local communities and a more democratic community-based development. Current tourism development policy processes inhibit local community participation in decision making. As a consequence, local communities have lost out environmentally, socially, economically and politically. The thesis is ultimately about exploring possibilities to enhance participation and deliberative democracy in small island settings in the Maldives

1.4 Scope and Approach

The research investigates three of the 20 administrative groups of atolls in the Maldives (Kaafu Atoll, Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alif Atoll). Alongside the capital Male', these three local communities offer a diversity of experiences of tourism development over four decades and represent the diversity of issues facing Maldivian communities. Each of these three atolls have experienced a distinct period of direct exposure to tourism development.

The research problem demands a multi-disciplinary approach that, draws on literature from economic development, development studies and tourism studies. I pulled these literature together around insights from political ecology to do with place-based questions of power and social and environmental justice. The thesis is about local communities and their capacity for self-determination in relation to economic development, social transformation and environmental change. The three community-level cases lead me to use qualitative techniques and interpretive analysis to track and compare shared and different experiences over time and space. These approaches include semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and critical analyses of policy documents and changes in laws and regulations, covering four distinctive periods of development, each associated with a specific tourism master policy.

1.5 Thesis Journey

My thesis is very much a personal journey and one that begins from two starting points. The first is my family history. I am the eldest and only son of my parents who migrated to capital city Male'. They migrated from one of the southern islands in search of better economic opportunities, social services such as health care and education for their family. I witness my parents' struggles to establish and support the family as Male' boomed with the growth of tourism. I lived the family's increasing disconnection from my parents' home island, which became marginalised by southern uprising in late 1950's (Al Suood, 2014; Hussain, 2013), and a long period of failure to build economic development opportunities. I always felt their fear in openly talking about the injustices and prosecution that happened during the southern uprising and government policies in general. As child, I was not allowed to visit my parent's island or atoll as my parent's memories of their island was frightening. I was not allowed to talk about some of these issues despite some of my confusion and curiosity over the gaps in the official written history of Maldives that was carefully crafted by those who were in power.

Little has changed, despite the democratic and constitutional reforms of the mid-2000s and the subsequent Decentralization Act 2010 (Corbett & Veenendaal, 2018; Musthaq, 2014), which established new local government authority and Atoll and Island Councils. This research asks why this is the case and represents a direct response to my deep-seated curiosity about the economic and political marginalisation of island communities in the Maldives.

The second starting point is my professional experience working in the government. My work involved me in some of the key processes that I study in this thesis. I served at various policy level roles in the first democratic government, including deputy minister of economic development, minister of finance and treasury and member of national planning council that allowed me to engage in some of the key reforms. I worked on democratic and economic reforms such as decentralisation, introduction of taxation, national planning process involving allocation of islands for tourism development, establishing a universal medical insurance and setting up a regulatory framework for small and medium enterprises. Working on some of the key economic reforms during this period involved routine interactions with political and tourism elites. I witnessed first-hand the influence that tourism elites were able to exercise over even the minutiae of state practice, and the concerted way in which they were able to advance their business and political interests. Together, my work and my family history have given me close insights into policy-making at the centre and the experiences and aspirations of island communities. They have led me to question the impact of elite formation and centralised governance on the tourism development experience of the islands of the Maldives. And perhaps significantly, taken together, they are responsible for the political project of knowledge production that underlies this research – the determination to identify and foster inclusive and deliberative democratic processes that will return control of their futures to the peoples of Maldives many different island communities.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter 2 positions the research within the tourism and development literature, in particular the body of research conducted on tourism in small

island nations. It brings to this literature theoretical concerns with both political ecology and participatory democracy, aiming to position the thesis in a transdisciplinary body of development thinking that highlights the co-constitutive nature of the economic, political, environmental and cultural domains. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and case study based research design adopted for this study. Chapter 4 provides a rare, comprehensive account of the Maldivian context, from its physical geography to its politics, environments, and Islamic spirituality and cultures. It also introduces the three atoll communities that offer up the place-based case studies in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapters 5 and 6 trace the changes in the tourism policy environment from 1972 to 1995 and 1996 to 2016 respectively. These chapters are crucial in the sense that they lay out the trajectories of policy change that have shaped the development history of the Maldives at national and island scales and have sedimented the shift from an earlier more localised regime of resource management to today's centralised regime. The narrative of TDP over 45 years represents a history of the calculated erosion of local sovereignty and marginalisation of island communities from the benefits of national development. Chapter 7 uses case study analyses of community participation in TDP in three island settings to illustrate how this process of marginalisation and disenfranchisement has played out on the ground in terms of power imbalances and uneven opportunities. Chapter 8 asks what might still be achieved through community participation, and the limitations and opportunities that shape the potential for further local participation in tourism development. Finally, the concluding chapter discusses what the research tells us about the potential for locally-led tourism development in SIDs more generally, and the importance of factoring both governance and environment into questions of tourism-based development in these settings. It makes a case for a more environmentally sound and culturally appropriate form of inclusive tourism development.

Chapter 2 Reconceptualising Deliberative Democratic Tourism Development for the 21st Century

2.1 Introduction

The aim of study is to examine the production of tourism policy in the Maldives which has systematically marginalised and excluded local community from economic development. The literature on sustainable tourism development and democracy has generally addressed these questions through a critique of democratic deficit and the failure of development models to foster meaningful local-level participation. This critique has commonly been abstracted from local context and/or driven by externally referenced normative commitments to participation as development practice. Guided by the insights of political economy and political ecology, as well as my own long-term, auto-ethnographically derived understandings, this chapter critically examines the literature. It builds towards an argument that a bottom-up theorisation of the historico-political, socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions of small island social formation and everyday life will provide a richer account of local democratic failures in tourism-led development and establish a more effective platform for rethinking tourism development potential and to realise it.

The chapter examines key concepts of sustainable tourism development, notably inclusive development, deliberative democracy, trust, community and participation. It draws on an interdisciplinary body of literature to locate explanation in both structural accounts of power and place-based political trajectories, and to explore key concepts in relation to a critique of power relations through them.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section focuses on tourism and development, where I discuss the shift in the literature on tourism development from dependency theory, to a critique neoliberalism, and then to sustainable tourism development and inclusive tourism development. In the second section I discuss tourism and democracy, by evaluating the literature on the concepts such as marginality, community and participation. The third section I conceptualised deliberative democracy within tourism development. The fourth section evaluates political ecology as a theoretical lens to look at issues of power relations, local community participation. Finally, a summary of the chapter and focus of the next chapter

is provided. The literature frames how I understand the relationship between tourism development and democracy in the Maldives context.

2.2 Tourism and Development

In the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century as the world tackled the problem of development, much interest turned to tourism as a vehicle for development (Sharpley, 2015). Tourism have become one of the dominant feature of all economies, not just developed countries and it is estimated that it contributes more than 10.4 % (US\$ 8.8 trillion) of world GDP and in 2018 it created 319 million jobs (WTTC, 2019). Scholars have argued that tourism is not just an economic phenomenon but also a social phenomenon that has gained attention from development literature (Telfer, 2015). In that respect, “international tourism is viewed as a means of achieving both economic and social development and progress and the redistribution of wealth and power that is, arguably, necessary to achieve such development” (Sharpley, 2015, p. 5).

This rapid growth of tourism has led to restructuring of small island economies such as the Maldives from exporters of traditional commodity to tourism services (McElroy, 2003). More importantly in Indian Ocean SIDS such as the Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius dependence on employment, foreign exchange and investment for tourism is much higher (UNWTO, 2012, 2014). In the small Indian Ocean islands State of the Maldives, successive governments have become fixated on tourism as a platform for development for more than four decades (Sharpley & Ussi, 2014). However, the economic growth that it has generated has not only masked inequalities but has contributed the harsh realities that local communities in the country have to face on every day basis from accessing their natural resources to accessing basic services such as health care and safe drinking water (Rasheed, 2014). These effects have undermined community life, restricted opportunities for communities to participate effectively in the development process, and removed their ability to steer development on their own islands.

There are two ways in which local communities can participate positively in tourism; “in the decision-making process and in the benefits of tourism development” (Timothy, 1999, p. 372). However, in most developing countries there is little evidence that the increased income and wealth has trickled down into local communities and tourism growth has failed to deliver development and poverty reduction in local communities. At the same time, local communities

have had little control over decision making, and have commonly lost access to their natural resources (Bello, Lovelock, & Carr, 2016a).

While few studies to date highlight the nature of the problem, De Kruijk and Rutten (2007) have argued that effective local participation could reduce many vulnerabilities faced by communities and help to alleviate poverty. Such opportunities are restricted by increasing “income inequalities and inequalities of access to infrastructure and facilities” (Yahya, Parameswaran, & Sebastian, 2005b) . Stronger government interventions are required to give local communities greater control over tourism and a stronger say in their futures (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Sofield, 2003). This thesis tackles these questions.

2.2.1 Critical theories of tourism development: from dependency to neoliberalism

Tourism development scholars have studied the relationships between “long-term processes of socio-spatial transformation and the mundane ways tourism affects people’s daily lives and livelihoods” (Devine & Ojeda, 2017, p. 607). They have sought to document specific experiences and impacts of tourism in place and to identify shared or common processes and effects across places. Early critics of tourism development drew heavily on dependency theory, while more recent scholars have centred their critique on neoliberalism and its policies of market governance, marketised and export-led growth, and trickle-down.

Dependency theorists argue that economic growth in industrialised countries and their model of development often leads to further exploitation and deterioration of economic and social conditions in less developed countries (Seligson & Passé-Smith, 2003). It attempts to explain the current underdeveloped state of many countries by examining the patterns of interactions among nations. It is further argued by the scholars that these interactions are based on “unequal relations between external and internal structures” (Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013, p. 133). As such Ferraro (2008) claims that the diversion of resources are maintained not only by the power of dominant states, but also through the power of elites within the dependent states. Thus most dependency theorists argue that these elites maintain a dependent relationship because their own private interest coincides with the interest of the dominant states (Ferraro, 2008).

SIDS are positioned in a particular way in these relations of dependency and uneven interdependency. Some scholars have argued that the very characteristics of SIDS which led

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to the “attraction to tourists also enhance their susceptibility to dependency on the tourism sector” (Sharpley & Ussi, 2014, p. 87). Based on such dependency and linkages to historical colonial times lingering within these island states, several scholars have taken ideas from dependency theory into tourism development and its link to the centre-peripheral relationship that is built on unequal terms (Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013; Fayos-Solà et al., 2014; Khan, 1997; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008b; Sharpley, 2015). However, critiques of using dependency theory in tourism development have argued that often studies have undervalued the importance of political and social dimensions within the country by placing more emphasis on economy alone (Haynes, 2008). Britton (1982), for example was the first tourism scholar to examine how tourism augmented the existing inequalities within a country between the core and peripheries by arguing that these have to be linked to “historical and political processes that determine development” (Britton, 1982, p. 332). These include the social structures and spatial forms of nations and spatial policies such as enclave tourist resorts. These policies seek to manage the impacts of tourism by containing them spatially, but in practice often result in little flow-on benefits into local economies while failing to contain social costs (Chaperon & Bramwell, 2013, p. 134).

Elsewhere, scholars examined core-periphery relations with island nations. Weaver (1998) explored such core-periphery relations in Trinidad and Tobago, and Antigua and Barbuda. He contends that the expansion of tourism facilitates “internal cores” were “more exploitative than the external core” (Weaver, 1998, p. 309). He further argues that tourism became “as a vehicle for further consolidating the dominant island’s control over the subordinate island” (Weaver, 1998, p. 310). Finally he also found that tourism “amplifies existing core-peripheral relationships” (Weaver, 1998, p. 292). In this respect, tourism development scholars working in SIDS have begun to examine the notion that “tourism can perpetuate unequal relations of dependency as well as encourage uneven and inequitable socio-economic and spatial development” (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008b, p. 23). Scholars such as Bianchi (2015) and Nunkoo, Gursoy, and Juwaheer (2010) have also highlighted similar issues and the challenges they pose for SIDS. These challenges for the subordinate islands or local communities need to be properly investigated through political, social and environmental dimensions and their interactions, as economic frameworks of analysis. It is important to understand who loses and who wins due to unequal relations created by tourism development.

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SIDS are heavily dependent on foreign investment capital. Domestic capital is extremely scarce (Schilcher, 2007, p. 176). Governments have no choice but to seek international capital. Under pressure from international lending agencies in the 1980s, this became very much a question of seeking private foreign investment (Britton, 1983). Tourism based development became entangled in neoliberal agendas, especially as SIDS became pressured into conditional loans by the World Bank and other lenders of last resort. In fact, Hall (1998, p. 146) notes that tourism development programmes have trapped SIDS “into the global capitalist system”, “which illustrates the industry’s ‘perfect fit’ with neoliberal development orthodoxy” (Schilcher, 2007, p. 169).

Neoliberalism is defined as a political philosophy and a dominant economic development approach that emphasises economic growth through minimal government interference in what are assumed to be free markets (Chomsky, 1999; Springer, 2009). The idea is that markets are more efficient, less corruptible, and better disciplined than government ownership. If private tourism enterprises are successful, they will provide jobs and local demand for supplies, which it is argued will stimulate further economic activity. The challenge for neoliberal reformists across the world was to disentangle states from markets.

Chopra (2003) argues that there are main five mechanisms through which this was achieved. First, by invigorating private enterprise with freedom of capital, goods and services with few or no government control and thus giving primacy to the rule of free market. Second, encouraging growth of profit for private sector by deregulation of government controls. Third, reducing public welfare expenditure but at the same time increasing government subsidies and tax benefits for the private sector. Fourth, increasing privatisation of State own enterprises, and finally reduction of ‘public good’ or community focus to more and more on individual or private enterprise (Chopra, 2003). The initial privatisation of state owned businesses argued to be necessary to kick-start neoliberal development is regarded by Marxist scholars as initiating a process of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2003).

Critics of neoliberal governance argue that deregulation not only transfers public assets into private hands and opens up opportunities to make profits, but it provides a supportive environment for market mechanisms. In practice, neoliberalism never achieves a radical split between the market and government regulation, funding or ownership. As Chopra (2003)

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observes, neoliberal reform almost invariably involved supporting private operators through regulation, research and development, labour market reform, subsidies, law changes that made possible land alienation, the suppression of political discontent, and much else. In the case of Maldives tourism, for example, as I go on to demonstrate in later chapters, all imported items for tourist resort island construction are exempted from import duties, while traditional sector such as building fishing boats are not given such subsidies for their investments. Rather more brutally, the authoritarian regime in Honduras forced a neoliberal development agenda using state violence and extra-judicial measures against the Garifuna community who resisted the enclave and extractive tourism practices through various legislative changes (Loperena, 2017). Similar experiences in other developing countries suggest that development scholars need to take a more critical approach to tourism development and the role of government in supporting foreign capital and what this means for democracy. After all, as critics of neoliberalism more generally insist, neoliberalism is “a political economic form of power-knowledge is constructed” (Springer, 2015, p. 6) – it is not simply a prescription for effective growth.

Scholars have heavily criticised the neoliberal influence on tourism development as well as on the broader development goals of developing countries. They have pointed in particular to the balance of costs and benefits at the local level, levels of local participation in decision making about tourism futures, and the levels of political conflict that have been produced by failures of ensure a tourism development process that is appropriate, just and locally sanctioned. In short, they accuse neoliberal tourism development policies of exacerbating inequalities and concentrating economic and political power in the hands of national elites and foreign investors at the expense of local communities, leaving these communities marginalised and facing uncertain futures.

Brohman (1996) argues for minimising the negative impacts such as enclave tourist resorts, cultural destruction, loss of local control and lack of deliberative participation and environmentally unsustainable activities. He calls for a “reactive approach toward tourism which stresses a series of balances linking tourism with broader development goals...rather than the immediate objectives of an elite minority” (1996, p. 66).

Scholars such as Duffy (2015); Harvey (2005); Springer (2009) have highlighted the processes by which global neoliberal policies exploit resources at the expense of the poor and

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impoverished local communities. Springer (2009) claims that neoliberal policy reforms such as deregulation and the privatisation of common property, enriches local elites and ignores conflicts and tension in developing countries. He further argues that these processes within which it takes place “may thus actually provoke a more authoritarian outlook, as those left behind come into conflict with those reaping neoliberalism’s rewards” (Springer, 2009, p. 274). Such marginalisation is exacerbated by the ecological consequences of tourism, and what is a neoliberalisation of nature “that cuts the threads that bind ecosystems together, so that the constituent parts can be transformed into new commodities” (Duffy, 2015, p. 529). The point is doubly important when it is considered that these are the same threads that bind small communities into their ecosystems, and even bind the communities themselves through cultural practices and on-going access to resources.

In many situations, the severing of ties between communities and their ecosystems have produced disruptions that have led to violent conflict such as in the Garifuna community on the Caribbean coast of Honduras (Loperena, 2017; Mollett, 2014). Such conflicts have been framed and analysed through the lenses of enclosure of resources, appropriation and dispossession, which is accompanied by accumulation of more and more profits by more powerful actors such as tourist resort owners and rent-seeking officials (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Hill, 2017). In some instances dispossession of local communities has taken the form of violence, while in others it has involved a long and damaging period of enclosure and dispossession. These scholars also have argued using the concept of “blue grabbing” to further our understanding of “the diverse implications of exclusion for different groups” (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011, p. 13). Scholars have argued that neoliberal policies in tourism development have even turned ecotourism and environmental conservation initiatives into dispossession and conflict (Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernández-Ramírez, 2010; West et al., 2004).

Addressing the dilemmas generated by tourism development is, however, a major challenge. As D. Hall et al. note, “it is often easier to discern who benefits and who loses” (2011, p. 22). This thesis argues that to further our understanding of how such outcomes emerged, we need to understand the social, political and economic circumstance embedded in over 45 years Maldives history. The literature suggests that dispossession and exclusion occur within an authoritarian form of governance. The absence of deliberative democracy suppresses local

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voice beneath state machinery and the rent-seeking behaviour of state officials searching for reward from private sector. I argue that tourism plays a pivotal role in these kinds of processes, yet that taking deliberative democracy seriously may open avenues to facilitating inclusive tourism development.

Neoliberalism is founded on a particular reading of democracy, that “free markets constitute the necessary basis for freedoms in other arenas, enabling a system in which economic and social power is dispersed and able to accommodate numerous interests” (Springer, 2009, p. 271). As a result, developing markets is seen as equivalent to encouraging democratic reform. However Biebricher (2015) highlights the tensions between democracy and neoliberalism, such as “lobbyism by powerful interest groups, that is, rent-seeking in neoliberal parlance, is a serious problem for contemporary democracy” (p. 263). Such practices limit fundamental rights and basic needs of those who are marginalised for the sake of market development and economic growth. This is before any attention is paid to cultural specificity, community forms of being, and collective ownership of assets and forms of labour, all of which point to even deeper holes in neoliberal conceptions of democracy and justice. The challenge is to seek context-specific democratic values that are required to empower marginalised communities in a developing context marked by institutions weakened by colonialism, authoritarianism or earlier rounds of neoliberalism; while at the same time that would foster sustainable tourism development.

In the Maldives, I argue that all governments that came to power after the establishment of tourism sector have pursued a neoliberal agenda that has favoured elites in the centre over the marginalised poor in local islands, and this has led to the persistence of an authoritarian form of government (Bowen, Zubair, & Altinay, 2016). Further as Weaver (1998) argued for the case of Tobago and Barbuda, tourism in the Maldives is also found to be amplifying the consolidation of Male’ as the dominant island, while other island communities have been marginalised without basic services. The kind of existing relationship between tourist resorts and local communities is not favourable to these communities as they often have to beg for basic services and employment opportunities from these tourist resorts. Government interventions, except for environmental aspects, were minimal through the various master plans and legislation mostly facilitated and supported the production of a conducive

environment for tourism sector to grow while it supported the authoritarian government. The relationship between tourism, authoritarian government and democracy is not unique in the Maldives. To understand this relationship, it is necessary to more carefully examine the power structures as it evolved in the economy and consider the value of sustainable tourism development.

2.2.2 Addressing the challenge: Towards sustainable tourism development

Tourism policy shapes how tourism develops, how benefits are distributed, and most importantly who wins and lose (Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall & Jenkins, 1995). In an ideal world, tourism policy would involve community-level processes of negotiation that sought to coordinate different interests and activities around common goals established to reflect the interactions among economic, physical and socio-political concerns (Borrelli & Kalayil, 2011; Hall & Jenkins, 1995). The contemporary literature, however, recognises several complications to this ideal. First, clearly any negotiations will take place in the grip of power relations that make some stakeholders more powerful than others (Airey & Ruhanen, 2014). Second, policy making processes are neither linear nor start with a clean slate (Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Saarinen et al., 2017). They are embedded in entrenched and often conflicting historical, socio-economic and political trajectories that influence how the policies evolve and become implemented. Third, in practice, tourism policy is negotiated more between states and private enterprises than between members of local communities (Dredge & Jamal, 2015, p. 287).

While scholars recognise that planning in tourism is multi-faceted and complex (Ruhanen & Reid, 2014), few have examined how policies and plans are formulated in relation to the multiple pressures brought to bear on the process. Scheyvens (2002) argues that in an environment of neoliberalism, tourism “responds to the whims of overseas tourists, the interest of foreign investors and the demands of supranational organisations” (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 234). Scheyvens (2002) also argues that contextual factors within which tourism development planning plays an important role in determining appropriate strategy for development. She further argues that “these contextual factors have a major bearing on a country’s opportunity to engage successfully within tourism process in ways that meet its needs at national and local levels” (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 234). She emphasises the need for tourism planning to be

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integrated by, “placing it in the context of other development priorities such as small business development, environmental protection, devolution of political control to the community level and providing economic opportunities for indigenous people” (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 234).

Sustainable development has become the fulcrum around which academic debates and actual policies revolve. While sustainability itself is a contested concept in these debates (Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Elliott, 2012; Sharpley, 2015), it offers a concept against which economic, environment and social concerns can be arrayed, if not measured and historical and cultural concerns considered.

The concept of sustainable development is especially important where tourism is based on environmentally fragile and vulnerable places such as the atolls of SIDS (Munt & Mowforth, 2015). More recently the on-going debate about sustainable tourism centres on questions of environmental sustainability after the Brundtland report. The literature documents instances of environmentally damaging activities and asks what levels of environmental damage are acceptable or manageable, whether less damaging practices and technologies could be adapted and whether tourism activities and models of tourism are perhaps so damaging that they undermine the potential for future tourism itself (Cowburn, Moritz, Birrell, Grimsditch, & Abdulla, 2018; Domroes, 2001; Kapmeier & Gonçalves, 2018; Zubair et al., 2011). In times of climate change and sea level rise the question is just as provocative in reverse, will environmental change destroy tourism, irrespective of what tourism operators actually do? In this thesis, I focus just as much on social sustainability – on community organisation, institutions and distribution of benefits. These dimensions of sustainability are crucial in relation to sustainable tourism development, which is supposed to enhance livelihoods and address MDGs such as poverty alleviation. A focus on poverty reduction strategy is important.

Many scholars continue to assert that there are potential benefits of tourism for local communities in terms of poverty reduction, especially for the poor (Scheyvens, 2015). Starting from 1980s and 1990s Community-Based Tourism (CBT), ecotourism, and other concepts were used to promote tourism as means to attain sustainable development. More recently, the idea of pro-poor tourism (PPT) has been developed to indicate a focus on promoting tourism that promises “net benefits for the poor” (Ashley & Roe, 2002, p. 62). Significantly, it shares concerns with sustainable and ecotourism in that it is supposed to benefit the poor in terms of

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social, environmental and cultural concerns as well as economically. Significantly, then each of these sustainable tourism development approaches emphasises social, cultural, and economic factors as well as, and often ahead of, environmental issues. (Bramwell, Higham, Lane, & Miller, 2017).

Proponents of PPT call for “mainstream” PPT so that it becomes “a business approach across the industry” and the focus to be put on large-scale effort (Ashley & Ashton, 2006, p. 3). Scheyvens (2015) argues that PPT promises four sets of benefits for the poor. First, it generates economic benefits such as income-earning opportunities and increases in government earnings resulting in the possibility of public expenditure to be directed to these communities. Second, the approach creates livelihood opportunities in close proximity to these communities thus reducing out-migration of skilled members of the community. Third, it focuses attention on how “tourism can bring “non-cash livelihood benefits” to the poor, including conservation of national and cultural assets, opportunities for the poor to get trained and develop further skills. It can also generate indirect benefits through tax revenues which government can use to support infrastructural development such as roads and water supplies and other basic services including education and health” Scheyvens (2015, p. 126). Finally, Scheyvens (2015, p. 126) notes that,

“there may be “policy, process and participation” benefits for the poor whereby the government puts in place a policy framework which encourages more direct participation by the poor in decision making, where partnerships between public and private sector are encouraged and where communication channels are improved so poor people have better access to information.”

Scheyvens (2015, p. 125) claims that such an approach will require “concerted effort” by all the stakeholders ranging from government, local governments, international tour companies, tourist resort owners to community. Her comments echoes Hall’s (2008, p. 41) insistence that “a sustainable tourism industry requires a commitment by all parties involved in the planning process to sustainable development principles.” Such calls for greater integration of all stakeholders, however, ignored many of the relations of power that mark contemporary, neoliberal tourism. They also tend to discount the issues associated with political structures and longer-term relations between political actors and tourism development actors. These power relations undermine the potential of community-led tourism development and the

potential of PPT, which I will argue has been the case in the Maldives. Instead, I will argue that the benefits of PPT depends on the presence of inclusive institutions and a deliberative democratic environment, which needs to encapsulate the tourism policy-making processes and encourage participation of all stakeholders.

The vast majority of studies have not considered the effects of interactions between dominant tourist enterprises and the wider social and political spheres of societies where sustainable tourism development and PPT have been promoted. The power exercised by particular political interests over local communities is commonly left out of accounts in the literature. The mainstream literature tends to ignore the economic and social exclusion of local communities that blocks the potential benefits from the tourism sector. Noy (2012, p. 39), however, argues that “tourism sometimes plays a mean role in transforming populations and instilling them with a sense of helplessness.” He maintains that scholars need to amplify the voices of marginalised communities, which might enhance critical understandings of the political forces that are obstacles to the sustainable development of these communities. Thus there is an urgency to understand the issues surrounding the governance processes and regimes, including participation and decision making of tourism policies and its implementation by local communities (Bramwell, 2015; Munt & Mowforth, 2015). I argue that we need to look at sustainable tourism as a concept more critically, broaden participation in tourism development decision making and implementation, and tackle the deeply embedded inequalities and growing dispossession. This study addresses the acute call for inclusive tourism development that could initiate improved conditions in local communities and make the most of the opportunities that may lie in different forms of sustainable tourism development.

2.2.3 Inclusive tourism development

The previous section has suggested that although sustainable tourism development offers a positive response to the challenges faced by local communities in tourism development, current practices and conceptualisation of sustainable tourism may not in itself be enough to address many on-going issues. These include: the inequalities and power imbalances between tourism elites and local communities (Bowen et al., 2016; Saarinen, 2016a); the lack of meaningful linkages between tourism and the local economy (Bello et al., 2016a; Goodwin, 2002); lack of decision-making power regarding tourism planning (Bello, Carr, & Lovelock, 2016); the loss

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of representation and decision making in shared resources such as lagoons and islands (Canavan, 2017); the increased tension and conflicts arising from the loss of previously shared resources due to enclosure, appropriation and dispossession (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Buckley, Guitart, & Shakeela, 2017; Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernández-Ramírez, 2010); and the lack of trust in tourism institutions which is important for a democratic tourism development process (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016, 2017; Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). Together, these concerns raise the question of how tourism development might become not only sustainable but also inclusive. The question is how to give effective voice to the concerns of marginalised local communities and environmental challenges such that communities may be able to exercise control over common resources.

Previous studies on concepts or terms regarding tourism and development such PPT have raised the issue of how to increase the poor people's share of economic benefits from tourism (Ashley, Boyd, & Goodwin, 2000; Ashley & Roe, 2002). PPT studies have not taken into account the social inclusion of poor and others in the marginalised group who may not be poor (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Studies on Community-Based Tourism (CBT) focus attention on empowerment and development of local community members as tourism producers (Okazaki, 2008), but this can come with the problem of ignoring a range of other local community groups such as local farmers, fishermen and women who may not be engaged in tourism as producers. There can also be communities that are excluded from tourism by the lack of the basic infrastructure and services necessary to develop the industry, despite the fact that the state is mandated to provide services such as safe water, transportation and electricity as in the Maldives. A single collective community or CBT model business venture cannot provide these services due to their high cost. Taylor (2017) using an indigenous community initiatives in Mexico as a case study, argues that CBT must find ways to address imbalances in power and inconsistencies in governance. Failure to do so will exacerbate "existing tensions and has arguably widened the gap between the politically and economically powerful and less powerful, marginalized families in the community" (p. 433). These views imply that it is important to look beyond PPT and CBT to the inclusion of marginalised voices within tourism development. This has led some scholars to talk of "inclusive tourism development", or as Lawson (2010) as argues, "an embedded conceptualisation of economic development which is

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informed by an ethical concern for people and care, not just economic growth” (Lawson, 2010, p. 359).

Inclusion is a central pillar of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP notes, “many people are excluded from mainstream development because of their gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or poverty. Development can be inclusive—and reduce poverty—only if all groups of people contribute to creating opportunities, share the benefits of development and participate in decision-making” (UNDP, 2017). The emphasis in inclusive tourism development is on opening up a “space” that is available to all groups to “contribute” and “participate in decision-making.” Rendón and Bidwell (2015), for example argue that “there needs to be effective spaces for participation, dialogue and decision-making by different actors” (Rendón & Bidwell, 2015, p. 207). Perhaps the most significant shift in the concern with inclusive tourism development is the attempt to see beyond the benefits alone to position the inclusivity that it might help to foster through tourism development as “part of a process of change towards more inclusive and sustainable development” (Rendón & Bidwell, 2015, p. 207).

To move towards a more inclusive and sustainable development and carve out a space for tourism development, Butler and Rogerson (2016) argue that national and local-level government along with the private sector play an important role. Distilling these ideas, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) define inclusive tourism development as “transformative tourism in which marginalised groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits” (p. 592). They argue that inclusive tourism can be used as an analytical term that directs attention to efforts to “counter socio-economic exclusion and divisions” (p. 595). This is an important point because it implies a praxis, a direct engagement in reconfiguring social and political worlds. It assigns responsibility to those involved in tourism, from state planners to foreign investors, to actively improve conditions. The researcher, too, can be argued to be part of this responsabilisation; that is, the researcher needs to engage in ways that support the development of inclusive practices and institutions.

Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018, p. 6) highlight inclusive elements such as “widening the participation in tourism decision-making and power relations transformed in and beyond tourism, promotion of mutual understanding and respect”. In this research, I draw on these

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elements to understand how the production of tourism policy in the Maldives has systematically marginalised and excluded local communities from economic development opportunities and to argue for a more deliberative process of tourism planning and implementation. Many of these elements of inclusive tourism development can be extended to a deliberative democratic formulation of tourism development. The concept of inclusive tourism, for example, compels us to ask critical questions such as who controls and makes decision about tourism development. Thus inclusive tourism calls for “enhanced citizens” - that is active participation in tourism decision making” (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018, p. 12).

Despite its concern with action at the local political level and its extension of narrower conceptions of community and sustainable tourism into the socio-political realms where their considerations might have some applied purchase, inclusive tourism development remains a marginal concern in the literature. It is early days for what is a new way of thinking about sustainable development in and through tourism. There are as yet few studies that use the term and few development programmes that claim to be inclusive sustainable development. However, the focus on power relations within the tourism development process is long overdue, and some critics have called it the best pathway forward for sustainable economic development (Gupta, Pouw, & Ros-Tonen, 2015; Gupta & Vegelin, 2016).

Nonetheless, the Maldives case suggests that as laid out by these scholars, it is still missing a more direct concern with the question of who controls and makes decisions about tourism. A more systematic analysis of historical political trajectories and wider social and political factors may be required. Such an analysis will reveal how to ensure a more meaningful and effective participation could be built into the democratic institutions within tourism policy making and beyond. The challenge is to extend considerations beyond the “short-term economic results” and distributional outcomes, and small-scale victories to do with local participation that have occupied other critical tourism development initiatives. To make progress, this new paradigm will need to confront and overturn “the structural and systemic causes” of poverty and marginalisation of its local communities (Zapata, Hall, Lindo, & Vanderschaeghe, 2011, p. 746). At the same time, inclusive tourism development must not let slip the importance of building a tourism that is increasingly sensitive to the need to learn how

to respond better to the constraints of small island environments and to accommodate environmental change, which may mean abandoning tourism altogether.

2.3 Tourism and Democracy

The idea of inclusive tourism development begins to shift concerns with development toward democracy. Scholars have argued that tourism development essentially involves processes, “that evolve through continuities and changes over time” (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018, p. 42). They also argue that such changes occur simultaneously in the socio-economic, environmental and political context that then “affecting tourism and in tourism’s impact on them” (p. 42). Using Cyprus as a case study Yasarata, Altinay, Burns, and Okumus (2010), for example, assert that politics plays a crucial role in tourism development in small-island developing states, and can often obstruct the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism. Overcoming the obstacles presented by obstructive politics requires a development policy that recognises and responds effectively to the intricacies of local political systems and power structures. An emphasis on deepening democracy is seen to be a pivotal starting point, and one that is essential for producing knowledge that will support a more inclusive tourism development in the Maldives. There are several reasons for this claim.

First, SIDS are often caught in the paradox of having a hugely successful tourism industry, yet one where development gains are centred on main islands, commonly to the point where environment and societies have been severely altered and damaged. The Maldives, for example, has experienced more than four decades of tourism development and now hosts a billion dollar industry, with resort islands serving the world’s elites the most expensive food and high-class services. Yet, neighbouring local islands lack basic services such as safe water, sewerage or electricity. Second, growth has come with intensifying pressures on infrastructure and environments and the increasing conversion to private ownership for tourism use of common natural resources that are essential for the livelihood and cultural reproduction of local island communities. Islands and lagoons are converted to private ownership with little, if any, community involvement in decision making. As many development scholars have argued people cannot control their lives if they cannot control or access the natural resources on which their own lives and livelihood depends (Dell’Angelo, D’Odorico, & Rulli, 2017; Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Hill, 2017; Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernández-Ramírez, 2010). Third, local

forms of governance and the institutions that support them are being ignored, displaced or overwritten by new practices. The social, economic and political lives of communities depends on these institutions and resources that remain under their control. International tourism has undermined the rights of island communities to their traditional resources and affected the socio-ecological system of their islands. Tourism development is thus having a double effect on the abilities of local communities to live their lives and shape their own futures. Turning to questions of democracy, centres this concern, and with it considerations of marginality, participation and community.

2.3.1 Marginality

Development in a general sense and tourism development more specifically has transformed island communities “from spaces and places imbued with social, political, and historical meaning for indigenous and local peoples” to places that are increasingly evacuated of livelihood, cultural meanings, and futures (Douglas, 2014, p. 8). In short, small islands have been excluded from the benefits of modernity by precisely those things that they have been promised will deliver them. In the Maldives, island communities, for example, are increasingly forced to live amidst the 5-Star tourism development. The tourism development has not reduced material poverty such as lack of adequate nutrition, poor infrastructure to support social and economic activities. In many cases they are increasingly denied access to their traditional resources such as islands for farming and bait-fishing lagoons, which may have worsen their situation. Recent report published by Ministry of Health highlights that Maldives continue to suffer from under nutrition among children and micronutrient deficiency among all age groups (Ministry of Health, 2017). The inequality is often extreme and deeply unjust, and has been forced on communities that have little or no say in the process. They have been marginalised in multiple and overlapping ways (Gatzweiler & Baumüller, 2014).

Gatzweiler, Baumüller, Husmann, and Von Braun (2011, p. 3) define marginality as “an involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, political, economic, ecological and biophysical systems, that prevent them from access to resources, assets, services, restraining freedom of choice, preventing the development of capabilities, and eventually causing poverty”. This definition captures a number of important features such as position and condition of individuals, actors or groups within social, economic and ecological

systems (Gatzweiler & Baumüller, 2014). It describes the condition of an actor in terms of decision-making capabilities as well as assets and resources (Gatzweiler & Baumüller, 2014, p. 30). To be marginalised means being positioned at the margin of one or more societal or spatial systems, and having few assets or capabilities that would allow actor to change the marginal situation.

The realities of the marginalised poor are local, diverse, and variable (Chambers, 1995). They are often poorly understood by policy makers. Chambers (1995) asks “whose reality counts”, that of the few in centres of power, or that of the many poor in the periphery? These realities differ more than most policy makers recognise. Shifting concern to the experience of the poor requires a deep change in approaches to development (Chambers, 1995, p. 175; Narayan, 2001; Nayak & Berkes, 2011). One way of doing this is to examine the relationship between community traditional power structures and the new elites, and to question what opportunities for participation might survive the grip of these relationships.

2.3.2 Community and participation

In many tourism development processes, communities have little voice in decision-making processes that fundamentally impact them, their environments and their futures (Tosun, 2000). Community participation is undermined by decades of unequal development that have yielded “apathy; inadequate financial resources; inadequate information; low education levels; unfair distribution of benefits; lack of trained human resources; a centralised public administration; lack of coordination; and human–wildlife conflicts” (Bello, Lovelock, & Carr, 2016b, p. 1). These ‘local realities’ manifest in a profound lack of access to decision making, which restricts the ability of communities to steer tourism processes in ways that might develop their interests in protecting environments or fostering small scale local businesses. Instead, the alienation of communities from their resources and environments creates conflicts that undermine community well-being and social capital, and further undermine livelihoods. While tourism promotion often emphasises sustainability or conservation initiatives, local communities are not involved in setting priorities and excluded from making deeper demands on tourism enterprises to tackle systematic environmental degradation, environmental justice, or the social conflicts brought about by exclusion. As a result, tourism development often results in what Robbins (2012) describes as the disconnection of ‘local systems of livelihood, production

and socio-political organisation” (Robbins, 2012, p. 21). In response, scholars have called for greater community participation in tourism planning processes and for government intervention to regulate the control exercised by networks of powerful actors (Bello et al., 2016a).

Community participation in tourism development is a widespread concern of critical development scholars (Bixler, Dell'Angelo, Mfunne, & Roba, 2015). Bello and colleagues (2016) have designed a community participation framework for protected area based tourism planning. It is based on seven participatory elements designed to counter ‘one-island-one-resort’ development processes that set aside a protected lagoon area for the exclusive use of the resort and exclude the local community from the area. The elements are: “timing of involvement, representativeness, resource accessibility, independence, influence and power, transparency and the decision-making structure” (Bello et al., 2016, p. 473). While the framework does not directly concern environmental management such as protection of beaches and waste management issues for local communities or the inclusive development emphasis on actively re-empowering communities, it provides a useful starting point for pushing an inclusive tourism agenda and a strong structure for investigating community participation in tourism development processes in the Maldives. It presents a workable alternative to the neoliberal approaches adopted by central government and a counter to the social and political structure that inhibits repressive, patronage, cronyism and blocks information to communities for effective participation in the industry.

There is an on-going debate on how to define community participation but scholars agree that the process of participation should involve empowerment, reducing knowledge gaps, and participatory decision making (Gibson, 2015) without which there can be no meaningful participation. A more critical understanding of participatory process emphasises giving voice to the powerless and those who might be identified as losers in development processes. Arnstein (1969, p. 216) argued that “participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless”. Working away from Arnstein’s position model that sees participation arrayed along a spectrum from citizen power to non-participation (Figure 2-1), Pretty (1995) identifies seven forms of participation. These range from manipulative, where all power and control lie with external groups outside the local community, to self-

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mobilisation, where power and control over the particular development entirely rest with local community. Each of these levels of participation is based on three characteristics, the particular nature of development, the level of community participation, the way power and control is shared. For (Tosun, 1999, 2006) these different forms of participation translate into three forms of participation, which he terms spontaneous participation, induced participation and coercive participation.

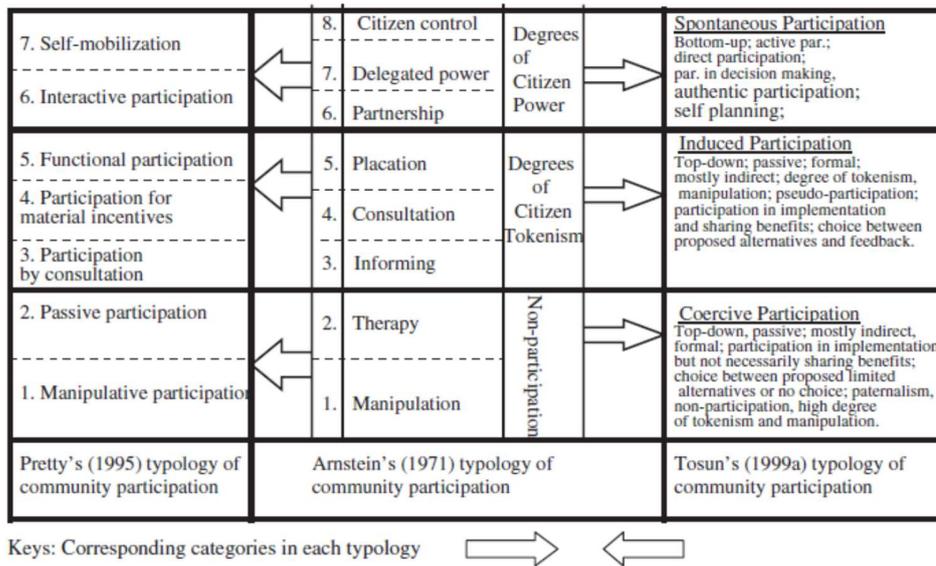


Figure 2-1 Models of Participation

Source: (Tosun, 1999)

Integrating Bello et al. (2016) seven elements of participation into Tosun (1999) typology of community participation provides a helpful platform for examining local community participation in any particular setting. It presents a model for analysing the inclusiveness of any tourism development model, or for designing a more inclusive tourism development process in settings such as SIDS. For Bramwell and Sharman (2000), such a model must consider three further sets of issues to do with the scope and intensity of participation and the extent to which they produce consensus. But what does all this mean in practice for establishing community participation processes to guide tourism development in a setting like the Maldives? The literature offers a set of guiding principles: fair representation for all stakeholders and extensive, on-going stakeholder involvement (Bramwell & Sharman, 2000), extensive and detailed information and the competence to interpret it (Palerm, 2000); and trust

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(Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016, p. 519). The importance of trust is often overlooked in the tourism development literature, but Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, p. 519) insist that it is an essential ingredient of any sustainable and democratic development process and critical for establishing effective on-going, collaboration among stakeholders. Establishing fair representation, ensuring competence, and building trust are thus key practical first steps to facilitating effective and just participation in tourism development and planning. Thinking forward to the case of the Maldives, this might involve asking three sets of initial questions that open a window onto the stakeholders, institutions and power relations at work, the resources available and required, and the levels of trust that must be built to ensure participation is based on transparency and equity. :

- Were local communities informed from an early stage about the tourism development process as well as the specific project, how, and at what level of detail?
- How open were the consultation processes, how and when were they conducted, and did they open avenues for local communities to provide input into both planning processes and any regulatory change?
- Did consultation address key social issues and all segments of the community including the most marginalised?

I will pose these questions in Chapters Five and Six. In the next section I ask what can be added to notions of participation and inclusive tourism development by an explicit concern with deliberative democracy.

2.4 From Inclusive to Deliberative Democratic Tourism

Ensuring meaningful and effective participation by local communities in the tourism development process will require revitalised institutions that not only encourage and secure participation but also safeguard against the influence of arbitrary authority and coercive power. Ideally, these will be enacted at both national and local levels. These institutions will need to provide case specific forms of democracy. In this section, I examine the value of deliberative democracy as a starting point.

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Democratic ideals such as freedom of expression, equality and free media are said to provide a platform for individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and concerns in such a way that societies will reach efficient and just social compromises. The three freedoms are also argued to ensure a public that is informed and educated such that they can take part in debates that will hold government accountable for its actions and make it responsive to public interests, concerns and pressure (Faguet, 2014; Li & Reuveny, 2006; Sen, 1999). Contemporary political theory distinguishes between two models of democracy; aggregative and deliberative democracy (Young, 2002). The distinction focuses attention “less on institutional frameworks of democracy than on the process of decision-making to which the idea of democracy refers” (Young, 2002, p. 18).

Scholars argue that aggregative democracy can work well in developed countries with well-established traditions of democratic governance and institutions, institutions that provide all communities opportunity to participate in decision making in transparent and equitable settings, and citizens are empowered to participate through education, democratic work places and so on (Biebricher, 2015). While neoliberalism has disturbed this environment by concentrating decision-making in the hands of a few privileged state technocrats and private sector elites (Ioannis, 2007; Young, 2002). In non-western settings, with less well-established institutions, aggregative forms of democracy have become even more closed down into the hands of elites, who work to render communities powerless, docile and malleable.

For the purposes of this thesis, the important point is that while the boundaries of democracy are contested, the tourism development process and those actors leading it continue to take it for granted that aggregative democracy is sufficient to guarantee participation for local communities in the tourism development process. This is a dangerous assumption, even if elections are ‘free and fair’, which commonly they are not. Mainstream tourism development scholars often make a similar assumption, failing to recognise the systematic forms of marginalisation discussed above. As the literature on inclusive tourism development recognises, a more critical approach is required that goes beyond equal rights to cast votes to actively creating the conditions for “effective, meaningful and informed participation” (Martinez, 2016, p. 285).

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Democratising tourism development requires that development processes reverse the marginalisation of communities and provide meaningful participation. It is about questioning who controls local communities and national vital resources, and ensuring that institutions are created to overturn control be a small privileged group. The dominance of short-term individual self-interest and profit making in making decision must be challenged and inclusive and sustainable priorities established (Gibson, 2009; Harrison, 1992; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). New incentives need to be established to encourage tourism actors to safeguard environments and support the development of livelihoods and inclusive communities. As it stands, in the Maldives and elsewhere, privatising lagoons and atolls or giving certain actors privileged access is achieved by silencing the voices and ignoring the priorities of other stakeholders are ignored. Democratising tourism is about finding ways to share the spoils of tourism more equally, keep environments healthy, preserve access for communities to natural resources, and make decisions inclusively. In later chapters, I will argue that in the Maldives, this means moving beyond tourist enclaves to find ways of encouraging more just forms by which they can coexist with local communities.

This challenge is becoming increasingly urgent as more and more resources are taken away from locals, conflicts and tensions increase, and environmental concerns deepen. This ought to create new ground for recognising that tourism and local communities are tied together, and finding ways to ensure mutually beneficial futures. However, this is not the case in many settings, including the Maldives. To make progress, trust between all interested parties has to be built, which will require new relations of respect – especially for local community values and aspirations. In settings like the Maldives, this must include religious values. Shakeela and Weaver (2018a) argues that in the Maldives negative attitude towards tourism development is associated in places where tourism is newly introduced and is also associated with traditional beliefs. I argue that these attitudes may be stemming from actual experiences that everyday member of local community who may be working or engaging with tourism activities that may hinder or restrict their religious beliefs. It may also be coming from the initial discourse that was prevailing and created to protect local culture by separating local community from tourism activities. But I argue that such negative attitudes and beliefs can be moderated if local communities are given a voice to address their insecurities and concerns. It is here I argue that

for a democratic transformation from an authoritative and aggregative model of democracy to a deliberative model.

2.4.1 Deliberative democracy in tourism development

Critics of aggregative democracy highlight the genuine difficulties faced by democratic institutions under the forces of the market and its controlling elites (Druckman & Nelson, 2003). The shift from social democratic, state led development processes to economically focused neoliberal governance has empowered economic and technocratic elites at the expense of others across the globe. 'Freedom, self-interest, and markets first' is the mantra (Friedman, 1980, p. 148). Concerns with justice and equality can only be secondary if the desire is to maximise overall welfare. But in practice, this means insulating tourism development policies from broader socio-economic and political dynamics and producing policies and pathways that do not recognise community concerns and do not deliver what people want or just and equitable outcomes (Britton, 1982; Hall, 2003).

By contrast, a deliberative democratic process begins with discussions of values and conflicting interests, develops ways of delivering an equitable process, and then works through that process to deliver outcomes that are arrived at collectively as goals. This offers up a different form of freedom of choice for local communities, which an enhanced freedom to choose their destiny. Subsequent deliberations will allow a greater understanding of issues, renegotiation of conflicting interests in the name of an alternative set of collective interests and concerns, and in turn changes in direction if necessary. This more deliberative approach promises policy making and decision making that is better informed than by just giving people a vote every five years. Ideally, deliberative democracy will allow marginalised communities to participate in decision making on equal terms (Karpowitz, Raphael, & Allen S. Hammond, 2009) and go further to ensure those terms are equal by overcoming impediments to participation.

Deliberative democratic approaches to tourism development must ensure effective engagement with local communities across cultural, environmental, socio-economic and political spheres. Doing so and breaking down boundaries between tourism and community life may open up opportunities to build a more authentic and meaningful tourism experience, as well as creating spaces for local communities to coexist without being marginalised or dispossessed. To

achieve this, however, will require significant change in decision-making processes at a national level as well as in relation to collectively owned natural resources and community futures at the local level. This brings into play far deeper questions than those to do with tourism alone. It will challenge the broader social, economic and political landscapes in which tourism takes place. With control of tourism concentrated in the hands of elites, it will remain unaccountable to popular control. Democratising tourism must mean democratising resource allocation by changing the way tourism and local communities relate to each other.

According to Weeks (2000) there are four basic elements in a deliberative democratic process: (1) broad public participation; (2) informed public judgement; (3) opportunity for deliberative, and (4) credible and methodologically sound outcomes/results (pp. 361-362). In the context of inclusive participatory tourism development, Fung (2003) argues that deliberation will deliver fairer and more legitimate outcomes because it will bring together a broad range of perspectives, a diversity of information, and eliminate the arbitrariness of decisions made to support elite concerns (Fung, 2003, p. 344). Yet to realise these gains, new institutional arrangements that are not controlled by elites with power and resources will need to be designed. The simple act of giving communities voice is not enough, a deliberative environment must be constructed to allow that voice to be heard without coercion or manipulation, resonate widely, and have effect (Karpowitz et al., 2009). Deliberative decision-making must involve inclusion, equality, reasonableness and accountability (Young, 2002). Only then, can communities be said to be participating, their concerns (genuine or otherwise) be weighed against others, and the potential creativity of their contributions be recognised.

Others insist that deliberation as a practice is more than simply discussion, irrespective of the institutions designed to secure it. They argue that it requires dispositional factors such as open-mindedness (Curato, Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, & Niemeyer, 2017), and/or a 'deliberative stance' that accepts "others as equal engaged in mutual exchange of reasons oriented as if to reach a shared practical judgement" (Owen & Smith, 2015, p. 228). For Cohen (2007), it presupposes commitments to "encouraging deliberative capacities, which is, inter alia, a matter of education, information, and organization" (Cohen, 2007, p. 220). Together, these dispositions alongside carefully structured institutions and practices are necessary to ensure that deliberation does not become an exclusive discourse marked by privileged understandings

and technocratic practices that further marginalise disadvantaged groups (Karpowitz et al., 2009; Mansbridge, Hartz-Karp, Amengual, & Gastil, 2006; Sanders, 1997). Deeply embedded inequalities and power structures may not be easily transformed by simply applying concepts such as inclusion or equality, but Karpowitz et al. (2009) argue that setting the deliberations of marginalised communities within their own “structured enclaves” (p. 602) offers a strong chance that they will retain force and autonomy. In the case of the Maldives, all this means that deliberation must be held within the local island community and must include sub-groups that are themselves marginalised in such communities such as fishermen or women.

Finally, it is important to protect deliberative forms of democracy against processes that polarise views or create new lines of marginalisation within marginalised communities. Again a deliberative stance, carefully designed practices, attention to trust, full knowledge, representation and competence are crucial, yet may not be enough without building into the process reflexive forms of evaluation. For example, structured enclave deliberations would address the concerns of many critics of deliberative democracy, yet some scholars worry that such enclave deliberations may lead to the polarisation of views where “members of a deliberative group end up at a more extreme position in the same general direction as their inclinations before deliberations began” (Sunstein, 2009, p. 3). While empirical evidence by Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä (2015) refutes the polarisation argument and suggests that enclave deliberations cause community members' attitudes to become “more tolerant” (p. 995) the cultivation of “deliberative norms” remains crucial (Grönlund et al., 2015).

2.5 Political Ecology and Tourism

The discussion throughout this chapter has centred politics, but while always pointing to the unjust practice and unequal effects of decision-making to do with access to natural resources, it has left questions of environmental justice implicit in the discussion. In this final section of the chapter, I use the concept of political ecology to bring them to the fore alongside concerns with social justice. Few studies to this date have engaged political ecology in a critique of the socio-environmental relations of tourism and the power relations that render many of these unjust (Gössling, 2003; Sarrasin, 2013; Scheyvens & Russell, 2012).

The concept of political ecology was first articulated by Eric Wolf in 1970. Since that time political ecology has become an important interdisciplinary lens for analysing socio-

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environmental relations and conflicts and thinking through questions about the relationship between human society and the natural environment with respect to political realities and conceptions of social and environmental justice (Neumann, 2005). Political ecology directs scholars to address socio-environmental relations as a field of power relations and conflict. It treats the contextual sources of environmental change, conflict over access, and the political ramifications of environmental change as intricately bound up with each other and with questions of both social and environmental justice.

Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) define political ecology as an approach that combines the concerns of ecology and political economy, and thus the interplay between social dialectics and the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources. Hence “political ecology is the study of social relations and the resulting power structures that are produced and reproduced between society and nature” (Douglas, 2014, p. 8). It involves a critical understanding of social and environmental change that takes into account the “intersecting and conflicting economic, social, and ecological processes operating at different scales” (Fischer & Hajer, 1999, p. 122). Political ecologists such as Blaikie and Brookfield (1987, p. 79) have from early on argued that such conflicts and complexities arises out of interconnectedness “of political economic relationships at the local, regional and international scales which determine the actions” of resource users.

The current form of political ecology emerged from neo-Marxism in the late 1970s and post-Marxist mixture of social movements and theory in the early 1980s (Bryant, 1997). Earlier political ecologists did not challenge the damage done by economic development but emphasised the philosophical and methodological challenges of ecology to existing forms of science (Forsyth, 2003). Blaikie (1985), Escobar (1995, 1996) and others introduced political ecology into the heart of concerns about the interconnection between social and environmental justice around resource struggles in developing countries.. Peet and Watts (1996) note that the concern about political ecology in developing countries has highlighted the belief that injustices are being committed against both local people and environmental resources, which are of value to local people, regional and provincial entities, and national governments as well as to the world at large. Moreover, there is no simple separation between cultural and natural worlds, such that social injustice is environmental injustice and vice versa, and any specific

injustice registers in each domain and resonates through each recomposing and intensifying unjust relations.

Political ecology, then, puts “politics first”, which is a powerful lens on social, economic and environmental change (Bradnock & Saunders, 2000, p. 67), and is in keeping with discussion in this chapter. It allows us to understand and grasp how a segment of society in power can politicise environmental issues, while others are marginalised and unable to participate in the environmental outcomes that mostly likely affect their livelihoods (Atkinson, 1991; Cole, 2012; Gössling, 2003; Peluso, 1992). It also forces to the foreground questions of socio-environmental relations, environmental change and environmental justice. For Forsyth (2003), separating science and politics in environmental policies may result in two serious problems: ignoring the underlying biophysical causes of environmental problems; and imposing unnecessary and unfair restrictions on livelihoods of marginalised people.

A critical political ecology approach stresses the importance of power, discourse and knowledge in the construction of environmental narratives through multiple economic, social and political forces (Forsyth, 2003). It builds on insights from various sources, including an appreciation of the relationship between discourse and power and the recognition that power is far more than ‘power over’ or a stock of capabilities to force one’s will on others. It occurs, as Foucault (1982) recognises, as a relation in all social relations and is made manifest in its exercise. Power is productive of social relations and effects, rather than simply a predefined capital invested to deliver particular outcomes. A political ecology lens will explore relations of power as an approach to understanding social and environmental injustice.

Socio-environmental relations are shaped by, and are played out within, environmental narratives. These narratives bind together social and environmental relations and emerge from all manner of sites and segments of communities, not just from powerful sites and actors. The narratives that might offer up alternative pathways to alternative futures may be emerging from marginalised groups that lack voice or visibility. The voices of women are often neglected or suppressed in tourism development processes in SIDS, even though they often play highly active roles in environmental management and resource allocation and use in rural and marginalised communities (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 2013). Critical political ecology provides a framework that allows for the amplification of women’s voices in relation

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to socio-environmental concerns. As an approach, political ecology insists on highlighting the power relations they make visible as well as making different environmental narratives heard. And it insists that environmental justice is bound up with social justice in these narratives and the way they are, or are not, materialised.

Forsyth (2003) argues that political ecologists confront the challenge to “integrate the structural focus on state, society and industry, and the poststructuralist attention to how interaction between such actors co-construct environmental discourses and narratives about environmental change and who should be represented as victims and villains” (Forsyth, 2003, p. 9). He further states that, “this challenge is also important for the analysis of so called ‘local’ or indigenous knowledge, which is often considered to be eclipsed by more dominant forms of explanations” (p. 9). Instead of essentialising approaches to ‘local’ knowledge or ‘local’ people, political ecology reminds scholars that it is more important to ask how, and by whom, are each defined as local (or ‘global’).

Forsyth goes on to suggest that a ‘critical’ political ecology might “contribute to new forms of environmental explanation by providing more inclusive means to acknowledge local environmental concerns and how such concerns have been addressed under existing environmental science” (Forsyth, 2003, p. 9). It is here that a feminist political ecology perspective can contribute. Fulu (2007), for example, argues that women are often excluded from leadership and decision making roles. They are also commonly identified as victims in environmental issues. In both these forms of marginalisation, they are positioned in unequal power relations. However, they are also denied agency. These unequal power relationships are bound up tightly with socio-environmental relations. Hearing women’s voices, learning from their understandings, grasping the politics of their relationships with others (human and non-human) are all essential to delivering deliberative democracy or other forms of social participation that might yield an alternative and more just tourism development. Political ecology makes this point strongly.

This is one of many observations that underlie Robbins (2003) warning that environmental justice requires social justice. He insists that – an effective conservation policy must account for the rights of vulnerable people as much as for environmental dynamism. Berkes, Colding, and Folke (2002) emphasise the importance of engaging local people and their knowledge in

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resource governance as well as efforts to understand social-ecological systems. Policy measures or interventions that do not take into account historical and geographical specificities, local conditions, and local knowledge will likely fail (Bixler, 2013). It is here that the lens of political ecology opens up the “complex interface of science and decision making in which science is ‘co-produced’ by various sectors of society and [where] separation of ‘facts’ and ‘values’ cannot be achieved” (Pielke, 2004, p. 407). These different sectors of society or groups of actors “define nature, legitimacy, rights, or use in very different, and culturally dependent ways” (Vaccaro, Beltran, & Paquet, 2013, p. 255). Often such assemblages of contradictory social relations are missing when studying issues regarding tourism and SIDS. The voices of small island communities for example, are neither singular nor necessarily consistent. Rather, they are complex, and time, place and relationship specific. Like Bryant (1992) before him, argues that to fully understand the complexity of this issue it is necessary to examine the characteristic of institutions involved.

Despite Stonich (1998) early pioneering study of relationships between tourism development, water, and environmental health in the Bay Islands, Honduras, political ecology approaches are rare in tourism studies. With notable exceptions (Cole, 2012; Cole & Browne, 2015; Gössling, 2003; Saarinen, 2016b), the literature has stayed clear of what is potentially a highly productive body of ideas that promises to focus attention on; “(1) the role of the local resource user and the capabilities and "decision-making environment" that affect the ways that resources are used; (2) the ways that local resource use is shaped by social and economic relations at multiple scales; (3) the ways that historical processes have shaped and continue to shape these relations; (4) the ways that society and the 'natural' or human-modified physical environment mutually shape each other over time” (Bixler, 2013, p. 274). In this thesis, I use it as a framework for understanding the factors mediating access to, and control and distribution of, environmental resources that shape island communities and the possibilities of tourism. Its concern with power and opportunity to participate in decision-making and the ways that they are bound up with the changing environmental conditions around resource use and access add new depth to interests in deliberative, inclusive and sustainable tourism. Given island communities and tourism unquestionably depends on the relationship between human society and the natural environment, a focus on the co-constitution of these relations in and through

environmental narratives and in the shaping of social and environmental justice adds new layers of insight into how best to produce new futures through deliberative practice.

The theoretical approach taken in this study is informed by political ecology and feminist post-structuralism. This means I worked with concepts from these extensive bodies of thought in a way that allows for the emergence of a meaningful theoretical framework. This is a ‘weak theory’ approach which combined with ‘thick description’ that allows for a process of rethinking economic dynamics (Gibson-Graham, 2014). I have drawn on a wide literature using the conception of political ecology, to assemble set of concepts. These concepts as discussed above are: sustainability, deliberative democracy, and trust. The approach to agency, social formation and social change enables me to understand how marginalised communities emerge and their connections to external structures that impact their social lives. Political ecology at its very base is thinking about inequality, marginalisation and the way these have changed or exacerbated or somehow altered by these structural engagements.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has critically explored a wide range of tourism literature, focusing attention on two broad frameworks for assessing the production of tourism policy and its implications for communities excluded from defining and pursuing tourism development opportunities in their own terms. These are inclusive tourism development, and tourism and democracy. The chapter argues that these need to be brought together to build a critical framework for developing tourism futures for marginalised islands and communities in the Maldives in the context of environmental degradation, climate change, and exclusionary top-down tourism development policy. The chapter points to the potential of deliberative democracy as a pathway to more inclusive futures, and to the importance of confronting the co-constitution of environmental and social relations and injustice when assessing or developing deliberative models. Widespread and effective participation, local voice and knowledge, diverse environmental narratives, gender and other forms of marginalisation, widespread participation, effective trust building institutions, transparency, and ecological concerns must all be built into deliberative practices to confront marginality. Any approach must address marginalisation, suppress the advantages of the privileged and the creation of winners, and seek actively to avoid the making of losers.

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Although tourism and participation are widely discussed in the literature (Bello et al., 2016a; Farrelly, 2011; Li, 2006; Mansuri & Rao, 2012; Marzuki, Hay, & James, 2012; Shakeela, Ruhanen, & Breakey, 2010; Su & Wall, 2014; Tosun, 2000, 2006), the relationship between democracy and tourism is underdeveloped (Yasarata et al., 2010). Very little research has been directed to how democratic gaps and deficits have shaped tourism, and vice versa, especially in a SIDS context where tourism is so central to development policy. The implication of tourism development in the production and reproduction of marginality and social and environmental injustice invites serious engagement from critical researchers. In bringing together the insights from a practically oriented development literature on how to foster participation in tourism development, with a more critical analysis of democracy, insights from the political ecology literature, and a determination to develop deliberative democracy as a pathway forward in the Maldives, the chapter lays out a broad framework for the analysis in later chapters. The chapter the wider literature to introduce the contradiction between government policies that promote democratisation in the Maldives, and tourism development practices that are openly dominated by elites to further their own interests at the expense of marginalised communities. This is contradiction that the thesis will argue needs to be resolved by deploying deliberative democratic governance to empower local communities to develop their own tourism futures in alignment with their own environmental narratives.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Tourism development and its impact on the marginalised community is complex social, political and economic phenomenon embedded within distinct context of the Maldives islands. As such phenomenon faced by these communities is not addressed by development managers, mainly due to the lack of knowledge surrounding the issues. Any understanding of these complex issues needs to be exploratory inquiry that is descriptive narrative style. A case study approach that is selected as a strategy allows us to address complexity of the phenomenon by placing research questions at the centre.

My research interest is to understand how the production of tourism policy marginalises local communities from economic development opportunities and how a more democratic and inclusive participation could respond more effectively to facilitate equitable development of outer islands. It further seeks to identify and argue for the possible implications of environmental challenges for marginalised communities who live near successful tourist resorts in the Maldives but who live under marginalised conditions.

I am from the Maldives and have worked professionally in various positions with different stakeholders and communities in leading the formulation of National Development Plan in 2005 and 2006. This was followed by a stakeholder consultation and extensive work undertaken at the first formulation of Strategic Action Plan (2009-2013) that followed the first democratic election. It was during these experiences I came to recognise that institutions fail to incorporate voices from marginalised communities due to power relationship within the institutions and within communities. This realisation was especially significant in the relationship that existed between tourist enterprises and the outer islands communities. It is here I came to think that there cannot be one single reality about tourism and local marginalised communities. Therefore, the current research was pluralist; recognising that competing realities can exist depending on how power structures or relationships are configured and reconfigured in the development process. Thus I set out to better understand how marginalised communities construct their understanding of social and political perceptions of tourism development. Further how they understand the measures introduced by institutions and the role

these institutions played in the marginalisation and re-marginalisation process. What types of institutions are in place to address the disconnect that resulted in the development of tourism in the Maldives and how are these communities drawn on to protect their future livelihoods? To this date no empirical study that has been conducted to investigate the relationship between tourism, environmental change, and inclusive institutions in the Maldives. As any investigation into the marginalisation of the outer island communities in the Maldives, it is important to look at how tourism impacts the community due to its dominance in political, economic and social spheres.

The chapter begins by outlining the general research structure and specific research methods used in this study. It justifies the choice of the pragmatic and qualitative approach taken as well as the philosophical grounding of the approach. The chapter highlights the key challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research involving marginalised communities in a contentious setting, especially with regard to tourism development in a small island developing state.

The research used a qualitative case study approach with in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main means of primary data collection. This chapter is structured into six sections. Section 3.1 is the introduction to the chapter. Section 3.2 highlights the philosophical and methodological approaches used in this research. Section 3.3 elaborates on the specific research methods used for data collection. Section 3.4 describes the methods of data analysis by detailing the techniques and tools used in the analysis. This chapter further highlights the ethical considerations and reliability of research. The second to last section (3.5) discusses how the methodology adopted provided a voice to the island communities and final section 3.6 provides the conclusion, including some shortcomings of findings.

3.2 Philosophical and Methodological Approaches

The overall philosophical and methodological basis for the research rest on two interrelated and complimentary approaches of pragmatism and qualitative (Creswell, 2013). For the purpose of clarity, I have discussed these two approaches separately despite the fact both are based on the same philosophical foundations. Connecting these approaches, this research relies primarily on qualitative methods, although it also uses secondary quantitative methods for understanding the communities, the tourism sector and environmental changes, and other

quantitative and qualitative sources of data is used to check for inconsistencies or consistencies in information (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

3.2.1 Pragmatic approach

I was trained in econometrics and quantitative methods so research into human nature and perceptions was a relatively new area of challenges for me. The literature guided my way into the research, but I realised that experiences gained in the research process strengthened the understandings and formulations of a specific methodology that is articulated at the end of this process. Thoughts and reflection that went into the formulation of research, exploring and critically evaluating the applicability of various methods of inquiry and practical interaction and exposure with research subjects and environment that shaped into organisation of information collected, all contributed into this rich experience. I found three factors contributed to the grounding of the research methodology.

My research interest in evaluating the economic costs and benefits of tourism in the marginalised communities evolved and shifted as I proceeded with the research and increased my knowledge of different ways to approach it. Earlier research into economics of tourism had been approached with a positivist scientific paradigm (Yahya, Parameswaran, Ahmed, & Sebastian, 2005). However, it was a reductive approach which left gaps, missing pieces and untold stories about the communities and the evolution of their relations with tourism sector. This process forced me to reflect on some of the drawbacks or challenges using a positivist approach. Usual measures of growth such as GDP or GDP per capita or employment created by the tourism sector, or an increase in number of tourist arrivals reveal how the communities evolved in terms of their relations with the environment they depended on prior to tourism. However, these mainstream measures of economic development cannot explain changes with tourism from an interlinked political, economic, social and environmental dimension. Many elderly island chiefs and entrepreneurs in their interviews fondly recalled their years of neighbouring uninhabited islands as part of community livelihood and recreation. They recall the community being consulted and having some decision-making power about these resources. However, when the tourism sector settled in, these communities were excluded from their resources. Currently, communities are not just excluded from participating in the tourism sector on an equitable and inclusive manner, but these communities are removed from their

livelihood opportunities and social spheres that played an important role in their resilience against different forms of vulnerability. It was here I asked, can these memories be captured in a structured questionnaire or be understood from pure quantitative figures such as poverty or household income and expenditures statistics. The challenge was to decipher the power relationships that dramatically changed over the past four decades. A positivist approach would just scratch at surface the deeply embedded historic and political terrains that shaped that the marginalised communities.

Out of these evolving thoughts and learning processes, I was guided away from a positivist approach. Positivist scholars argue that researcher should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study and empirically justify their stated hypothesis (Creswell, 2014). However, for the reasons above, such an approach would not allow for constructing the multiple realities that affect the power structure which results in the conditions that are faced by these communities. Therefore, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) observes that qualitative researchers position themselves within the paradigm of constructivism and interpretivism. It is argued that qualitative research paradigms such as interpretivism, constructivism, relativism, humanism and postmodernism are more appropriate for understanding multiple realities. Qualitative schools of thought claim that multiple constructed realities cannot be time and context-free generalisations. Further Guba (1990) argues that most of such research is value-bound and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality.

Within these issues emerged pragmatism, which combines qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches as an alternative way of looking at research (Creswell, 2003). By combining these two approaches, pragmatism opens up the researcher to opportunities to unlock several constrains. By placing research questions at the centre of this process, research can be inclusive, pluralistic and complementary. I found this approach practically much more applicable to address my research questions as it recognised the existence and importance of the natural or physical world, as well as the emergent social and political world that includes language, culture, and human institutions. This pragmatic approach was particularly useful in investigating human-environment interactions which is part of this research focus because tourism depends heavily on these two interactions. Creswell (2009) argues that the pragmatic

approach places high regard for reality and influences of the inner world of human experiences in action. He further states that knowledge is viewed as constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and lived in. Another advantage of adopting this approach for this research is that, it takes an explicitly value-oriented approach to research that is derived from cultural values and specifically endorses shared values such as democracy, freedom, equality, justice and progress. It is at this point in my view a pragmatic approach provides a much-needed overarching way forward in conducting research which supports a complex social and ecological setting.

3.2.2 Qualitative approach

A qualitative research approach offers a deep understanding of social realities in an inductive and interpretative manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Merriam (1988) noted that it is ideal for exploratory studies, such as this one. Furthermore, it is useful for describing complex phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. Qualitative approaches are more responsive to local situations, conditions and diverse stakeholder's needs and challenges which was necessary in this study. This allowed me to shift the focus of the study to incorporate new emerging realities of the field as it was anticipated prior to field work and made the field work meaningful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Furthermore, Creswell (2003) emphasises several advantages of qualitative approach as preferred methodological approach for a researcher with the kind of questions this research seeks to answer. First, he states such an approach is mainly concerned with processes rather than the outcomes. Second, it is concerned with meaning, such as how people make sense of their living conditions, experiences and structures of their social, economic and political environment. Third, it considers the researcher to be one of the primary instruments for data collection and analysis and fieldwork to be an important component that allows researcher to observe behaviour and conditions in the natural setting. Fourth, it allows for focusing on descriptions rather than numerical numbers, so that an in-depth understanding is attained. Finally, it is inductive in nature, whereby the researcher can build abstractions, concepts and hypotheses from what is observed from the field.

3.2.3 Research strategy

In order to obtain the advantage detailed above in a qualitative approach, a suitable strategy of inquiry and method of data collection is pivotal. Within the qualitative approach, there are five strategies of inquiry; "narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory and case

studies” (Creswell, 2014, p. 18). Creswell (2014, pp. 18-23) highlights that each one of these different strategies offers unique advantages over others, but our appraisal of each one of them should be made with reference to the nature and objectives of research project that is reflected by the research questions of a research. Therefore a strategy of inquiry is often referred as the general approach adopted in a research (Robson, 2002). Case study was the strategy of inquiry selected for this research after considering several factors and research questions pertaining to the nature and objectives of this research. Some of these factors detailed below are applicable for this research.

First, case studies are most appropriate in understanding specific situations or problems and also useful in research areas that are relatively less known (Ghauri, 2004, p. 109; Stake, 2013, p. 135). Second, Yin (2003, pp. 5-7) notes that, case studies seek to answer a wide range of questions such as “how” and “why.” Third, Ghauri (2004, p. 111) argues that case studies are particularly useful when research phenomenon is embedded in its context and what is studied cannot be separated from the “contextuality” of research phenomena. Therefore case studies further aid in building a holistic understanding of complex contemporary phenomena in its context (Gerring, 2007, p. 77; Yin, 1994, pp. 2-7). Fourth, case studies allow for a wide range of data collection from multiple sources such as interviews, documents and reports of various types and methods (Eisenhardt, 1989; Ghauri, 2004; Yin, 2003) that enable the critical understanding of complex issues (Merriam, 1988). Therefore a case study approach with interviews conducted widely enough at local level and across three sites enabled me to identify anomalies and contradictions, both of which I pursued in the field and in analysis. Finally and most importantly case studies as a research strategy recognises the role of theory as a guide throughout the research (Gerring, 2007).

3.2.3.1 Case study site selection.

As highlighted in chapter four, each of the case study sites are uniquely positioned in terms of their exposure over time from tourism development and distance from the epic centre of highly authoritative and centralised form of governance in the Maldives. The historical expansion of tourism from the Kaafu Atoll to other outer atolls and the Bio Reserve project of Baa Atoll that uniquely built a relationship between tourism, government and local communities in the absence of participation both suggested the selection of case study site for this study. Kaafu

Atoll was as the primary case site as it remains to be the hub of tourism in the Maldives and its importance is due to the centralised nature of governance. As mentioned before, Baa Atoll was selected for its Bio Reserve project, local island communities that still live on traditional livelihood activities and an atoll that experience tourism in its early years of expansion. Gaafu Alifu Atoll was selected for its remoteness from the centre, local communities predominantly depend on traditional activities and late arrival of tourism activities. Tourism activities in this atoll started only recently and could be argued as a result of democratic-reform process. Details of each case site are described in chapter four.

3.3 The Methods of Data Collection

The research used both primary and secondary data sources.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

For this research both informal and semi-structured interviews were used. There were two-prong approaches to the use of interview methods. First, I used different types of interview methods appropriate at different stages of the research, e.g., using informal interview in the initial phase and then moving to semi-structured interviews. Most of the informal interviews were conducted at the preliminary interactions with individuals and institutions. Second, I used semi-structured interviews once I developed a good rapport with local community and business stakeholders and for the government and local government.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews provides opportunity to develop the interview in ways that are reciprocal and dialogical (Hay, 2010). They enable the researcher to obtain detail information from the participant's responses to open ended questions. Unlike structured interviews, the researcher can guide participants to emphasise and adjust the questions on significant areas that may arise during the course of the interview (Hay, 2010; Valentine, 2001). Therefore in a semi-structured interview, an interview guide or pre-determined questions is employed (Bernard, 1988). Often the questions asked are content specific and are guided to the issues of area judged by the researcher to be relevant to the broad research objective and questions (Dunn, 2000). In this type of interview the role of researcher is central, and is recognised to play a facilitative role which provides the opportunity to redirect the conversation if it moves away from the research objective, but at the same time maintains the exploratory inquiry intact (Dunn, 2000). The pre-determined questions in the interview guide

contained leading questions that were critical in initiating a dialogue with the participants. One of the advantages of using this method of interview is that conducting these interviews in a time bound period. At the same time the use of pre-determined questions mitigates the risk of running out of time to cover both the breadth and depth of information required for the research. Most of the interviews were conducted in a discussion mode which allowed the participants to engage in a meaningful manner, at the same time it allowed for refocusing the interview to emerging issues during the interview. At the designing of the interview guide prior to the field work, I was aware of the fact too many questions would stifle the participant in engaging in the discussion and whereby revealing critical information useful for the research. At the same time, I was aware of the fact not to leave out any important leading question that could leave serious gaps in the information gathered. For these reasons I conducted a two pilot testing interviews that allowed me to refine some questions and interviewing techniques at a practical level.

Primary data that was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews were mainly from five categories of participants: government officials (which include current and past, both policy makers and senior officials at the civil service level), private sector tourism owners or entrepreneur and management staffs, local councils, island community members, and civil society (see Table 3-1). Prior to departing to the fieldwork, 54 interviews in all five categories of participants were envisioned as target for planning purpose. However, this was not definitive limit and was subject to change with the information that was collected. The decision to stop further interviews was made in the field when I felt the point of saturation of information and no new information could be acquired with an additional interview in each of these categories. A total of 72 face to face interviews spanning from 45 to 60 minutes were conducted in the field.

Table 3.1

Selection Criteria for the Participants

Participant Category		Selection Criteria	No of interviews
Government officials	Policy makers	Active or past (Capturing the different periods)	16
	Civil service officials	Active or past (Capturing the different periods)	
Private sector (tourism)	Owners	Tourist resort owners both recent investors and pioneer owners of the industry	7
	Management staff	Active	9
Local councils	Women Development Committees members	Active	5
	All other members	Active	8
Island community	Elders, women, fishermen, farmers, traditional livelihood practitioners, boat builders,		24
Civil society	NGOs that are related to tourism and community directly or indirectly.		3

The procedure for selecting the site-specific interviewees followed a rational for qualitative interviewing that place less emphasis on ensuring numerical representativeness and ‘positionality’ of the interviewee. Lindsay (1997, p. 59) refers to such techniques as ‘theoretical sampling’, in which the “primary concern is to interview people who have distinct and important perspective on the theme of our research question”. Therefore, at the field I based it on my skills and judgement. I focused on obtaining information about both historical and on-going policy level issues pertaining to the tourism industry in the chosen local communities. This required covering a wide range of events, process and policies. “Purposeful sampling” or

“criterion-based selection” was used to identify informants. Purposeful sampling or criterion-based selection strategy was applied to have deliberate selection of particular settings, persons or events, and to get the vital information required for the study (Gray, 2013; Maxwell, 1996). I used “snowball sampling” strategies. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to identify a small number of potential individuals, who identify other potential informants (Gray, 2013, p. 88). Snowball sampling was used when I had problems identifying the right people for the interviews, especially in the island communities, where I was a stranger. This particular strategy was employed on several occasions, mainly in Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alifu Atoll. “Convenience sampling,” was used “on the basis that they are conveniently available” (Gray, 2013, p. 88). I used this strategy in the three atoll locations of which 11 islands I conducted the study, because of resource and time constraints.

Key individuals were selected for interviews and discussions were undertaken in a careful manner to avoid exclusion of any segments of the relevant organisations and island communities. I tried to include informants from a range of age groups, elderly, middle-aged and youngsters of both genders, including people from all livelihood sectors of the visited communities. Special attention was paid to include women as a distinct group due to the fact women are majority who are marginalised in the island communities and at policy level. However, actual sampling approaches were determined by the particular conditions and circumstances of the field.

I drew on my previous experience as a development official in the Maldives to identify potential interviewees prior to leaving for fieldwork, and contacted insider networks that helped me to negotiate access to study sites (Ministries, Tourist resorts, Islands and Civil society). These “gatekeepers” facilitated access to potential participants for the research (King & Horrocks, 2010). I sent initial invitation through email or formal letter by post. I had face to face meetings with the gatekeepers upon arrival at the fieldwork sites to arrange semi-structured interviews and participant observations. Irvine and Gaffikin (2006) argue that qualitative fieldwork is “messy” and is often said to be unpredictable with political and ethical “perils and pitfalls” at the field in my case this included several uncontrollable factors such as weather changes that impacted travel to islands, political instability, and health related issues at island sites such as that occurred in Gaafu Alif, which lead me to return back to Male’ for

medical treatment and returning back after recovery. In some cases, interviews with policy makers and tourism resort owners confirmed a date of interview while at atoll sites, in which case I had to return back as those confirmed dates were important to meet due to their availability in the country. At the same time, to reach out to some political elites who are part of the opposition party who are now out of the Maldives due to their safety issues was only able to reach by travelling to Sri Lanka (Colombo) for the interview. As obtaining some of the initial informal interviews or meetings progressed slower than anticipated which meant I had to delay or I had to visit some island communities twice. In the end the range of people interviewed for the scope of issues discussed were rich and insightful. But an end result of this research process was quite enriching and lead to a deeper understanding of the issues faced at the island communities.

Since the key focus of this research is on the marginalisation of communities by the tourism industry, different atoll regions were considered. Some atoll regions (described in chapter 4) such as Kaafu Atoll started to engage with tourism sector from its initial years with the largest number of resorts surrounding these island communities. Gaafu Alif only had one resort open in 2012 with total three resorts now in close proximity to these communities. Baa Atoll was selected for three reasons. First, the atoll had resorts built close by its communities since 1988 and this gave the local community the opportunity to engage with tourism industry. Second, Baa Atoll has the first ever United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Bio Reserve and a project that is said to be a collaboration by both industry and local community in an industry dominant position that gave a different perspective on the level of participation available for these local communities. Third, Baa Atoll has island communities that depend solely on fishing or other traditional activities that are independent of tourism sector.

3.3.2 Document analysis and secondary information

Detail research was undertaken to analyse relevant state regulations, policy documents and laws concerning the tourism sector and local communities. Furthermore, four tourism development Master Plans provided the frame of understanding of changes in government policies over the course of this period. A list of all documents is presented in Table 3-2. This policy analysis tried to capture the overall policy environment within which the tourism sector

was developed over the past four decades. It provided an understanding of the processes and strategies through which local communities were influenced because of tourism development. Furthermore, it brought out various historical and current trends in tourism development. Document analysis involved the collection of secondary information from variety of sources such as from state level, local councils, private sector and civil society. At the state level includes ministry of tourism, parliament, and other relevant ministries.

Table 3-2

Overview of Documents Analysed

Government Agencies	Plans/Policy document/Laws/Regulation	Years covered/Enacted
Department of Tourism and Foreign Investment	Tourism Act 1979.	1988 -1999
Ministry of Tourism	Tourism Development Plan: Republic of Maldives	1984-1992
Ministry of Tourism	Second Tourism Master Plan	1996-2005
Ministry of Tourism	Third Tourism Master Plan	2007-2011
Ministry of Tourism	Fourth Tourism Master Plan	2013-2017
Ministry of Tourism	Tourism Act 1999	1999-to-date (8 amendments to date)
Ministry of Tourism	Regulations: Regulation for Submission of Proposals for Leasing Islands, Plots of Land and Lagoons for Tourism Purposes	August 2016
	Regulation for Submission of Proposals for Leasing Islands, Plots of Land and Lagoons for Tourism Purposes	August 2015
	Tourism Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation	December 2013 (1 amendment made August 2016)
	Hotel Regulation	
	Resort lagoon boundary	2012 (2 amendments, last one made in November 2016)

Government Agencies	Plans/Policy document/Laws/Regulation	Years covered/Enacted
	Regulation on Tour guide	October 2012 (2 amendments made, last one made on April 2014)
	Tourism Statistics Regulation	May 2011
	Regulation on Lease Extension Fee	2010 (3 amendments made, last one made in January 2016)
Ministry of Tourism	Regulation on Lease rent	December 2010 (3 amendments made, last one in January 2013)
	Regulation on Grant of Rights on tourism resort	December 2010 (1 amendment made on January 2014)
	Regulation governing foreign tourist vessels cruising and harbouring in Maldivian waters	March 2008 (2 amendments made, last one made on February 2014)
	Operation of tourist vessels	January 2008 (3 amendments, last one in February 2017)
	Guest House Regulation	January 2008 (1 amendment in 2010)
	Travel Agency Regulation	November 2006 (1 amendment made in October 2012)
	Regulation on the Protection and Conservation of Environment in the Tourism Industry	July 2006
	Yacht Marina Regulation	May 2005
	Diving Regulation	February 2003
	Maldives Tourism Master Plan 1996 – 2005: Review and Recommendations	April 2003

Government Agencies	Plans/Policy document/Laws/Regulation	Years covered/Enacted
Ministry of Environment	Environment Protection and Preservation Act of Maldives (4/93)	1993-to-date
Ministry of Planning and National Development	Millennium Development Goals: Maldives Country Report 2007	October 2007
	Strategic Economic Plan: Republic of Maldives	2005
Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance and Treasury	Millennium Development Goals: Maldives Country Report 2010	2010
Ministry of Planning and National Development	7 th National Development Plan 2006 – 2010	2010-2010
Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture	Uninhabited Islands Act (20/98)	1998-to-date

3.3.3 Positionality

My positionality as a Maldivian with previous senior policy, political and technical positions were critical. I was able to recognise sensitivities, and manage to approach my participants with deep prior knowledge and establish a platform for discussing difficult issues that otherwise might have remain hidden from an interviewer. My language, social skills, and interest in local events also made the interviews easy and productive. I was also able to conduct myself in the manner which enabled me to navigate the personalities of others which became the main criteria by which I was judged in the field and therefore able to collect information. This in turn affected my access to certain people, the degree to which they will opened up and

shared their stories and views. Ultimately this had a positive impact upon the quality of material gathered (Moser, 2008).

Several scholars have explored how positionality affects their fieldwork and have argued that it is vital element of producing knowledge subsequently. In that respect, Moser (2008, p. 384) questions many aspects of positionality and argues that no researcher is a “neutral observer” and “completely unbiased.” She further states that, “if researchers are subjective and carry with them unique individual biographies, the knowledge they produce is necessarily affected” (Moser, 2008, p. 384). The context in which the researcher is positioned produces different realities and findings as, “we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position” (Hall, 1992, p. 258). This argument is contrary to arguments made by previous scholars of supposedly “all-seeing and all-knowing” scholars (Rose, 1997, p. 305). A number of scholars have examined and increasingly made the proposition that particular researchers are being positioned within “various power structures that privilege certain voices over others as where we are located in the social structure as a whole and which institutions we are in . . . have effects on how we understand the world” (Hartsock, 1987, p. 188). Furthermore, McDowell (1992, p. 409) argues, “we must recognize and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participant, and write this into our research practice.” Therefore we can argue that positionality is a strategy that has been “employed to contextualise research observations and interpretations,” which is said to “involve the researcher identifying ‘key political aspects of the self’.” (Cloke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000; Moser, 2008, p. 384).

While carrying out fieldwork my positionality brought a certain amount of cachet that opened access to participants previously inaccessible on the research issues. It provided different dimension to existing literature. However, this was not enough to sustain the relationship necessary for this research. As argued by Moser (2008) the initial respect I was able to command based on my various positions soon gave way to a respect I had to earn based on aspects of my positionality. I was fortunate to be able to navigate the social scene of marginalised community islands. I willingly spent time chatting at great length with policy makers, resort owners and industry pioneers and different island community members.

As said before the research questions originate from my own background and interests as a researcher from the Maldives. Being raised in a family that moved from a marginalised community from southern atolls to a middle-class community in the capital Male' and then working extensively as a technocrat and a policy maker I was uniquely positioned as researcher with first-hand experience, to observe the many difficulties facing marginalised communities.

There are three distinct advantages of myself doing this study. First, being a Maldivian gives an extra advantage how the island communities were struggling with the power relationships and cultural backgrounds that sheds light to the perception of this community. Second, being trained as a development economist meant I have worked in all major ministries (Central Bank, Ministry of National Planning and Development, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Finance and Treasury) which gives me insight into these institutions and communities. Third, I have also worked at the highest political level since the first democratically elected government in the Maldives. In sum, I have worked 12 years in these different institutions at both technical and policy level. I am currently not a member any political party and had not held a political post since my resignation in December 2011. This gave a sense of non-political assurance or comfort in an environment of highly political or political instable state of the country. (*Fieldnotes 1*)

While my positionality gives advantages, it also produced complications as well. Some of the key drawbacks that may arise as a matter of concern are identified by Chavez (2008), "over-identification or over-reliance on status obscures researcher role or goal of research, social roles in group or community constrain researcher role and objectives, requests to take sides in community political and moral issues, bias in entering field and establishing rapport, difficulty with recognizing patterns due to familiarity with community" (Chavez, 2008, p. 479). Since I was aware of this complication, I was able to respond to it in the fieldwork. In addition to presenting participant information sheet and consent forms, prior to initiating interviews and discussions I orally stated clearly the objectives of the research and gave assurance that this research is not part of any government or political study or work.

Qualitative interviewing involves carefully entering the participants life-world, particularly when tackling sensitives issues, interviewing elites and in politically charged settings. One of

the most important elements of data collection during interviewing on a sensitive topic is the ability for the researcher to develop a rapport with participants. An appropriate use of self-disclosure plays an crucial role in this process. Darbi and Hall (2014) believed that the way to develop a good rapport involves giving as well as receiving information in a two-way process between participant and researcher. They further argue that through this, the researcher can better form a trusting connection with participants, helping them to share their experiences. Some of the difficulties that I faced as a researcher in tackling sensitive topics are; building rapport so that depth and quality of information and experiences revealed by participants and minimise the power imbalances between me and participants:

I met many of them for second time when I was able to get the interview. First meeting was mostly to exchange information about: 1. Why I resigned so suddenly, 2, What I am doing since then, explaining that I am no longer in politics as announce in 2012 and I am pursuing to be in academics in the University and hence I am currently a PhD student at University of Auckland, New Zealand. A second meeting was then timed and conducted as per the interview guide. In between the interviews I took time to reflect on what had been said and what had occurred.

3.3.4 Challenges in interviewing elites

The role elites play in framing tourism business practices, various responsibilities, destination branding, policies, institutions, impact on local communities and decisions that then shapes the representation, infrastructure that surrounds it and economic development opportunities makes them important subjects to be interviewed for greater depth in tourism development (Darbi & Hall, 2014). A significant number of interviews for this study were political elites and business elites. As such these elites are well positioned to “wield power in a different societal, legal, financial, political and organisational settings” (Darbi & Hall, 2014, p. 833) in transforming tourism development in the Maldives. Several scholars concur that interviewing elites as a method has the opportunity to improve the research data given the power and influence of elite participants (Darbi & Hall, 2014; Lancaster, 2017; Lilleker, 2003; Morris, 2009). Although the definition of elites is contested, elites can be defined as “those with close proximity to power or policymaking” (Lilleker, 2003, p. 207). While he admits that this definition could be broaden beyond the politics, Morris (2009, p. 209) concurring to the definition adds, “corporate, political and professional elites.” Scholars argue that elite interviews provide historical insight

into events and processes that are not captured in published or official documents (Darbi & Hall, 2014; Lilleker, 2003; Morris, 2009). Lilleker (2003, p. 208) further argues that such interviews can provide the opportunity to “learn more about the inner workings of the political process, the machinations between influential actors and how a sequence of events was viewed and responded to within the political machine,” thereby the researcher is able to partially view a “blind spot” in a given study where the wielding of power takes place behind closed doors. And further it adds depth in addition to covering a broad sample of interviewees of that process or event and with documentary analysis to support it before the interview and after the interview.

However, Darbi and Hall (2014, p. 834) identifies two major challenges in conducting elite interviews. First, gaining access is not easy with elites. He further states that, “elites build barriers and institute gatekeepers using the power at their disposal in order to restrict access and analysis.” Second, if elites are refusing to participate or not forthcoming in their interview, researchers faces challenges in terms of ethics and code of conduct, if the researcher has to resort to disguise or manipulate in order to gain access to elites (Darbi & Hall, 2014). My positionality as explained in section 3.3.3 helped me to overcome these challenges. For both non-elites and elites, previous policy experience and engagement served some level of respect and they also found themselves at ease talking to me, as I could relate to the discussions.

3.3.5 Ethical considerations

A key aspect of any social research is to ethically and responsibly carry out fieldwork (Iphofen, 2011). Prior to fieldwork the research, I obtained ethics approval by the University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Committee. The bulk of the primary data collected was through interviews, the ethical issues were taken into consideration and necessary safe guards used to protect research participants, the research process and the credibility of the research findings as per the University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics requirement. Interviews were conducted after providing written and reading out all necessary information such as the nature of the research and other key information to participant. It was then followed by obtaining written consent in order to gather information in an ethical manner before starting the interviews.

In addition to this process, I further assured orally that the information collected will be used for research purposes only and gave all participants the opportunity to ask any questions with sufficient time and consideration, before signing the consent form. All the participants were recruited voluntarily and were not compensated. Their names were not revealed if they objected to it. They were also given the option to withdraw from the research at any time. To comply with confidentiality, the data (both hard and electronic copies) was not shared with anyone. Electronic data was stored on encrypted memory sticks and password protected computers at all times. Participants in research were assured that their names will always be kept anonymous if requested.

In order to carry out research in the Maldives, the authorities (National Bureau of Statistics) do not require any approval before commencing the study within the Maldives for PhD research. There are also no additional special permits required at national or atoll and island level. As such no special permission was sought prior to the fieldwork. However, for statistical and logistical purposes, I consulted some staff at the National Bureau of Statistics prior to departing for the field work and during the island community visits. These consultations provided some sights into these communities and logistical issues while in the field.

All the interviews were digitally recorded and interview notes were taken. Since I speak and understand the local language at the study sites, no translator was required. These interviews were then self-transcribed during and after the fieldwork. This helped to maintain confidentiality in the research process.

3.4 The Data Analysis

This section describes the process adopted for data analysis and tools utilised. In qualitative research the process of data analysis refers to breaking down, conceptualising, categorising and presenting data in a manner that can help the researcher to make authentic interpretation of the empirical evidence collected during research (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Furthermore, Yin (2009, p. 136) identifies three different stages of this data analysis process are: 1) locating the relevant data and arranging it into various conceptual categories by assigning codes. 2) Reviewing the codes with the purpose of refining, merging or extending the different categories as required. 3) establishing and explaining relationships between codes with the help of different analytical strategies and techniques and here a researcher may have

a range of choices. As an analytical strategy this research adopts “theoretical propositions,” where by similar themes are used to interpret the empirical data that is collected (Yin, 2003, pp. 111,116-120).

After conducting a few semi-structured interviews in the field, I started transcribing the audio recordings from the interviews. It was immensely challenging than I initially anticipated for two reasons. First, most of the interviews were in local language (Dhivehi) and listening and typing was very time consuming. Second, to ensure the protection of the information and maintaining confidentiality of participants, I personally fully transcribed all interview recordings. However, this enabled me to get more familiarised with the data, possible themes started to emerge and helped me in the analysis later.

Out of 72 interviews only 15 interviews were in English, the majority of interviews (57 interviews) were in Dhivehi language. Although Dhivehi scripts were used in the identification of emerging themes, categorisation of the information into these themes were done in English by paraphrasing the Dhivehi text. Such a step in the analysis of the data is inevitable given the possible loss of meaning and context if transcripts are translated. Further Hennink (2008, p. 30) argues that such a translation process involves “constructing a particular social reality of the study participants that may not have the same conceptual equivalence in the language into which it is being translated.” Temple and Young (2004) highlights that what is more important is to have a proper understanding of language in the culture and social context of the participants. As such my dual education, both languages at various stages of education and professional experiences puts me in a good position to do the translations myself. As a researcher and professional, I had previous experience in research process that enabled me reduce possible biases if a translator were to be used. However, I do acknowledge that these translations will be inevitably influence by my positionality as explained above. I also took my own notes and photos during the interviews and at the end of each day with the community or at resorts which is used for further analysis.

My analysis of the data collected from the field was inductive, which allowed the data to guide me to the themes that were produced. Such an approach was taken mainly due to the nature of the study as indicated earlier, as the research does not aim to test a particular hypothesis or theory.

I read and coded the information into elements and linked these to identify themes in the data. These coarse themes were then iteratively refined to form the main findings of this research.

I also linked the themes from the analysis of the transcripts to my field observations. Such a method made it possible to highlight possible biases in the information received from interview participants and also these field notes also helped me verify some aspects of a theme or added more detail knowledge that in some cases participants failed to include in their interview. Finally, these themes and findings were examined in light of documented literature and theories.

Document analysis is the study of documentary or secondary sources (Laws, Harper, Jones, & Marcus, 2013). The study analysed and reviewed secondary documents, including tourism sector master plans (1983 to 2014), related laws and regulations which were mostly in Dhivehi.

3.5 Giving Voice to the Island Communities

My past interactions and experiences as an insider to these communities gave me a small window of understanding to the real challenges and issues faced by the communities. But the experiences and interactions that I encountered during the field visits was enlightening and revealing. Having heard the stories of pioneers and key resort owners of the tourism industry, policy makers, tourist resorts senior managers (both local and foreign) and then visiting and listening the nearby local communities as they conceptualise different stories of how they struggle due to continued marginalisation was revealing. It was a picture that was not depicted by narratives that are shaped by dominance of the tourism and its vitality to the country. The study confirmed the voices of communities from previous studies in the tourism and political literature of the Maldives (Shakeela & Cooper, 2009; Shakeela & Weaver, 2018b; Zulfa & Carlsen, 2011), the reflections from the tourism industry and policy makers gave another perspective on what could be avoided for a successful tourism industry to continue with an empowered community surrounding it. Bruner (1991) argues that the human experiences and memories of happenings are organised in the form of narratives. Therefore it can be said that narratives are how we interpret and make sense of what we learn from the field (Denzin, 2009).

As a researcher, to understand the underlying issues of communities while the tourism sector developed into a world-famous destination with a multimillion-dollar industry, I had to listen

to all the sides of the story to make a sense of the reality. Out of the many realities out there, what is presented in this research is my own interpretation of the reality I constructed from the data I collected from the field. I admit a complete reality cannot be constructed. Bruner (1991, p. 13) “narrative ‘truth’ is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability.” In this research I have attempted to include many stakeholders of the tourism industry and different voices of the community. In all visits to the communities and resort islands I took pictures and made use of these photographs to add to the visual narratives that might have been missing from the interviews and observations.

I hope these different narratives will add to improved understanding of communities that surrounds the successful tourism business and tourism businesses and communities can add to each other in complimentarily, more than a marketing technique.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have provided a detail discussion on the research approach adopted within this thesis. It explained the rationale behind the selection of research strategy, data collection techniques and methods for data analysis pertaining to philosophical and methodological. The underlying consideration for methodological approach was based on the main research question: How has production of tourism policy in the Maldives systematically marginalised and excluded local communities from economic development opportunities and to what effect? From this main question, three sub-questions were considered for the multi-site case study. The research used a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews that covered from policy level, tourism resort owners to local communities. These interviews questions covered a 4-decade period, to interview key figures who served in tourism policy making over this period. It further included extensive documentary analysis of tourism Masters Plans, laws and regulations.

Chapter 4 The Study Context

4.1 Introduction

The research is fundamentally place-based, and the approach I adopted is to read tourism development processes from place. This thesis is about political marginalisation from core questions of a tourism-led development that will define social and ecological futures in the Maldives. At its heart lies a deep concern with marginalisation/exclusion faced by Maldivian communities in the production of tourism and the social, economic and ecological lives that then ensue. This chapter lays out the context of marginalisation and opens up to view the structures shaping that marginalisation and what it means for the communities concerned. This requires a deeper understanding of the historical back ground from which the various political, social and economic features and dynamics of communities and the tourism sector that have emerged in the arguments built in this thesis. What follows is a more thorough account of the socio-political development of the Maldives than is conventional in context setting exercises. The point is that what is often treated as context is in fact the social, economic and political material that is being assembled and reassembled in contemporary political processes. Further, in the Maldives case, this socio-political context has meant that the narrative itself is rarely laid out publicly. Narrating it here is very much a contribution in and of itself.

The chapter consists of ten sections. In the first section I have provided an introduction to the chapter. Second section provides an overview of the geography and people. Third section discusses a brief discussion on economic development opportunities in atoll communities in general and followed by a section on the three study specific sites that were used as three case studies analysed in this study. Section five, describes society and cultural context in the Maldives. Sixth section provides a discussion on Islam and state, followed by briefly looks into the government and democracy of the Maldives in Section 4.7. A discussion on Political economy before tourism in section 4.8 is followed by a discussion on transformation of political economy after tourism in section 4.9. A final section before summary discusses the environmental challenges faced by these island communities.

4.2 Geography and People

The Republic of Maldives is an archipelago of 1,192 coral islands set vertically across the equator in the middle of the Indian Ocean in a stretch of the 1600-kilometre-long chain of islands. The Islands lies in a north-south chain, 820 kilometres long and 130 kilometres wide (See Figure 4-2 for the map of Maldives). These islands form 26 natural atolls, with only 188 islands are inhabited by local population. All are small and low-lying islands, where the highest point is no more than two metres above sea level. The total land area of 1,192 islands is approximately 300 km. Only 33 islands have a land area in excess of one square kilometre. Three islands have a land area greater than three square kilometres (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). For governance purposes the islands are grouped into 20 administrative units called atolls. The Maldives have a total area of 115, 300 sq km including sea and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) area of 859,000 sq km (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

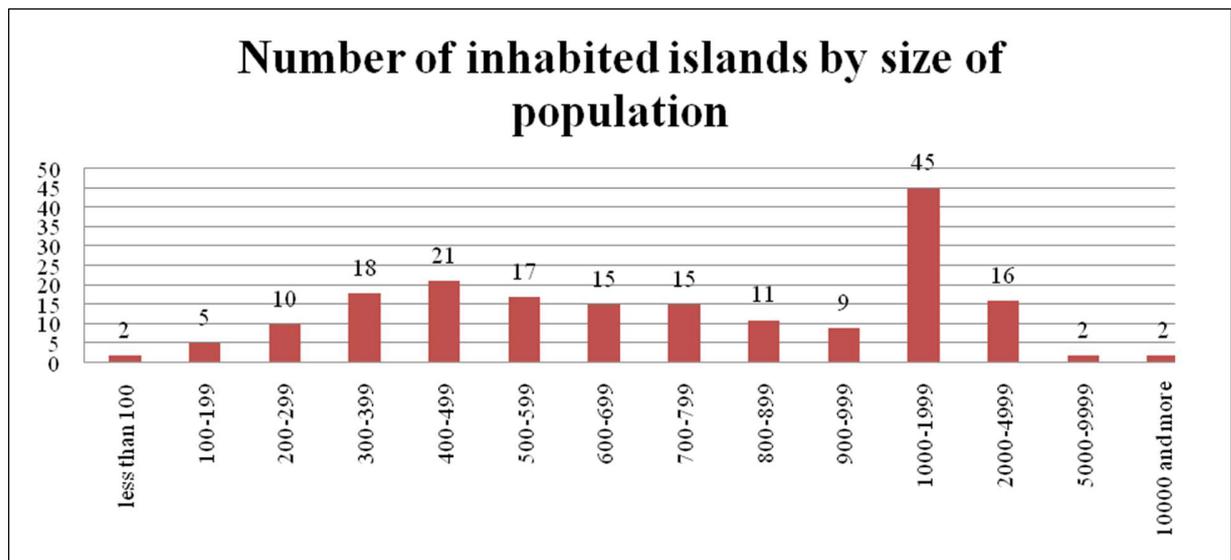


Figure 4-1 Inhabited islands by size of population in the Maldives.

Source: (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019)

According to the 2014 Census (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) the population of the Maldives was 344,023 of which 174,666 are men (representing 50.77 %) and 169,357 are women (representing 49.23 %). Of the total population 129,381 (38 %) people live in Male', the capital city and the remaining 209,053 people are thinly spread around the 188 inhabited islands. See Figure 4-1 for the distribution of population. The 2014 Census also reveals that

close to half of the population is younger than 20 years (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). See Figure 4-2 for a map of the Maldives with study sites indicated in red dotted circles. There are 135 resort islands, 458 guesthouses, and 133 Safari vessels that are mostly in the central region of the Maldives (Ministry of Tourism, 2018).

The main inquiry of this research was undertaken on three atoll communities that have experienced the introduction of tourism at different stages of its history in the Maldives. The first atoll community is in the central region and includes two islands from *Kaafu Atoll*; the capital Male', Thulusdhoo, and Maafushi. Male' was selected for the government and tourism stakeholder interviews as tourism policy is heavily centralised. Maafushi and Thulusdhoo were selected primarily due to its past fisher community, a community sharing the lagoon with resort island and very recent transformation of the island due to guesthouse introduction. The second atoll community is in the North Central region: Baa Atoll has six distinct islands communities with different economic activities which have had little or no connection to tourism for more than two decades. This atoll also has a UNESCO recognised Bio Reserve that has had marginal participation by the community and is dominated by tourism sector stakeholders. The final location of inquiry is in the Southern Region: three island communities in Gaafu Alif Atoll, where the tourism sector was introduced in 2010-2011. These islands are primarily engaged in fishing and small-scale farming. Detail discussion on each of these atoll communities are given in section 4.4.

4.3 Economic Development of Outer Island Communities

There are several structural disconnects that shape formal employment options in the country. These include lack of reliable economic development opportunities on home islands, the enclave nature of tourism in the Maldives, and lack of transport network between resorts and nearby island. The affects as gendered and supported by cultural and religious beliefs. Men often live and work on separate islands from their home island for majority of the year and women are discouraged from "working at an enclave tourism operation" (Shakeela et al., 2010, p. 71; Shakeela & Weaver, 2016).

Both agriculture and fisheries sector have undergone a gradual decline as a percentage shares of Gross Domestic Production since 2006, while tourism in these atolls expanded during the same period (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Such transformation is evident in most SIDS with a rapidly expanding tourism industry (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Outer atoll communities have little or no access to tourism markets except to bring their few agricultural and fish products to Male'. Even if access to tourism markets were made, these outer atoll communities would face considerable difficulties to materialise such opportunities to create

jobs due to lack of access to basic social services and infrastructure on these islands (De Kruijk & Rutten, 2007). Over the period of high economic growth from 1980 to 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), access to employment, health care, education and other services rapidly improved but only in greater Male’ region. This created a significant divide between Male’ and other islands communities in the Maldives. Such conditions are reflective of the average annual per-capita income gap that is illustrated in Figure 4-3. We can observe that Region 2, where Baa Atoll is belongs to has a per-capita of only MVR1,605 (US\$102) despite on-going tourism activities since 1983 and Region 6 where Gaafu Alif belongs to has a per-capita of MVR1,639 (US\$104), compared to Male’ with MVR4,252 (US\$269) and National average with MVR2,746 (US\$174) as illustrated.

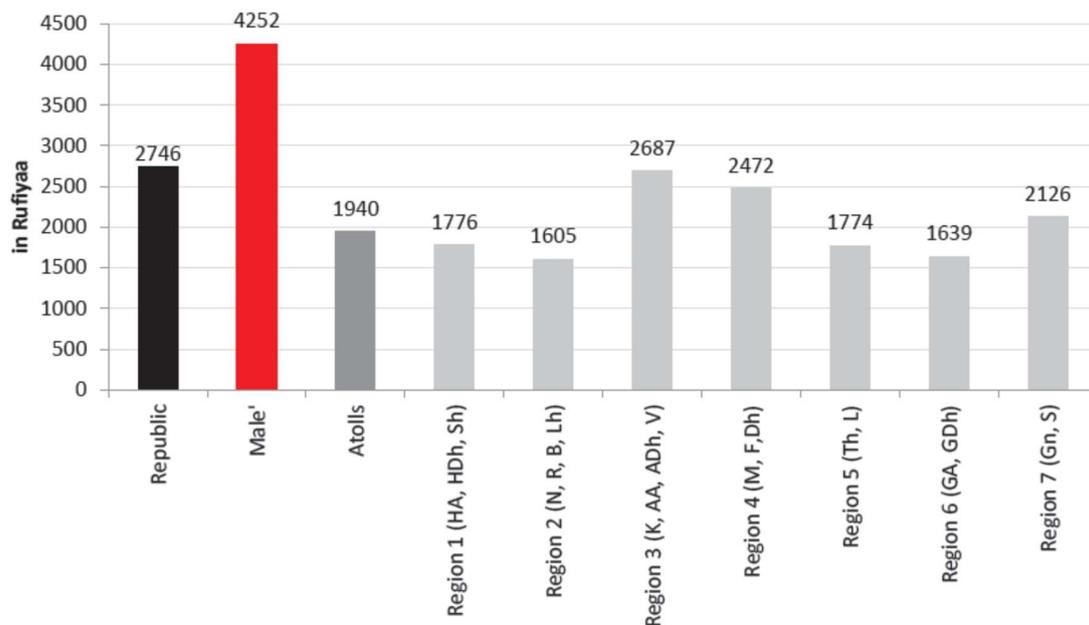


Figure 4-3 Per-Capita income by locality, 2009/2010.

Adapted from: Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010, Source:(Department of National Planning, 2012)

While annual per-capita income by locality in Figure 4-3 shows the gap between outer atoll communities and Male’ in 2009/10, official statistics such as Gini coefficient indicates a slight improvement of income inequality from 0.41 in 2003 to 0.37 in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) and improvements in poverty highlighted in Maldives MDG report 2010. However, Rasheed (2012) argues that these data conceal the real living conditions that members of these communities undergo in terms of safe water, access to employment and

healthcare, lack transportation between islands, high levels of under nutrition and other social issues such as high level substance abuse within youth (Rasheed, 2012).

4.4 Study Sites

Despite the rapid economic growth witnessed by the Maldives, outer island communities are faced with major developmental challenges, especially with regard to relative poverty and growing inequality (Rasheed, 2012). With the expansion of tourism that is based on ‘one-island-one-resort’ enclave resort system to outer atolls and the disconnection between tourism policy and local communities is discussed in this study, many remote communities are left with various challenges and conflicts in traditional economic development activities such as fisheries and agriculture. In addition to traditional economic activities, the civil service provides one of the main sources of employment. Out of the total 24,696 civil service jobs across the country, 16,147 are in the outer atolls in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). There is an important gender dimension to this with 54 % of jobs in outer atolls are occupied by women, as they constitute the highest resident population in most islands, compared to Male where women occupy 57 % of jobs in the civil service (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Some of this description is provided by respondents from the fieldwork because little other published material is available (see Chapter 3 for methodology that explains the interview process).

Table 4-1

Summary Facts on 12 Islands (2016)

Atoll	Island	Population size	Main economic activities
Kaafu Atoll	Male’	133,412	Central economic and administrative hub
	Maafushi	2,631	Operation of Guesthouses and fishing
	Thulusdhoo	1,133	Operation of Guesthouses and fishing, Atoll Administrative centre
Baa Atoll	Dharavandhoo	744	Operation of Guesthouses, fishing, boat building, and farming

	Kudarikilu	410	Fishing
	Kendhoo	830	Guesthouses, tuna fishing and reef fishing.
	Eydhafushi	2,554	Atoll administrative centre, guesthouses, fishing
	Maalhos	460	Reef fishing, boat building
	Kihaadhoo	345	Farming
Gaafu Alifu	Vilingili	2,554	Atoll administrative centre, fishing, guesthouses and farming
	Gemanafushi	1,160	Fishing and farming
	Dheevadhoo	505	Fishing

Source:(National Bureau of Statistics, 2019) and field notes

4.4.1 Kaafu Atoll

Kaafu Atoll consists of 107 islands of which only nine are inhabited by local community. Figure 4-4 shows Kaafu Atoll with islands and resorts. A total population of Kaafu Atoll excluding capital city Male' (Male', Hulumale' and Viligili which is commonly referred as greater Male') is 12,232 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Greater Male' holds almost one-third of the total population which is 133,412 as indicated in Table 4-1. Maafushi and Thulusdhoo has a total population of 2,631 and 1,133 respectively. There are total 42 tourist resort islands nearby and 183 guesthouses operated on these local islands. In terms of the total national share of tourism bed capacity, in 2015 Kaafu Atoll has 36.5 % (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). Both Maafushi and Thulusdhoo have resort islands sharing the same lagoon.



Figure 4-4 Map of Kaafu Atoll.

Source: Google Earth

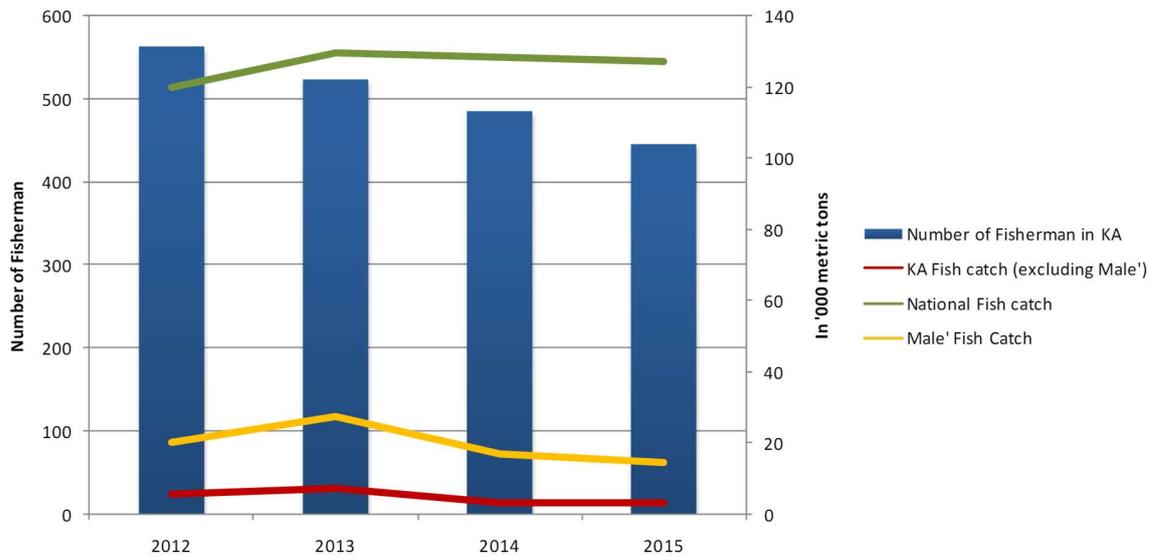


Figure 4-5 Kaafu Atoll fisheries sector.

Source: (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019)

Male' is the hub of all business services and government administration and provides the largest source of employment and major economic activity, followed by tourism, then construction, then fisheries. As indicated in Figure 4-5 in 2015 there were 446 fishermen in Kaafu Atoll; however, the number of fishermen is declining, consistent with the similar decline as shown in the national fisheries sector employment figures and fisheries sector GDP contribution. The fish catch of Kaafu Atoll (excluding Male' figures) have over the period 2012 to 2015, also declined from 7.4 in 2013 to 3.3 in 2015 (measured in '000 metric tons). Due to low fishing catch and unavailability of close-by bait-fishing lagoons, many fishers have moved out of tuna fishing in these communities and diversified mainly into two tourism related economic activities (Respondent 41). First, they have increasingly invested in guesthouses since 2010. And second, due to the increase in reef fish consumption by tourists both from resorts and guesthouse, they have transformed their fishing vessels to reef fishing (Respondent 41). Such activities have caused increased in conflicts and competition for the same natural resource over the period.

Official statistics on agriculture is scarce in the Maldives is scarce until 2017, but a large percentage of agricultural products are either brought to Male' or sometimes sold to resort directly. As such in 2008 and 2010, 24 and 21 % of national agricultural products that were

brought to Male' came from Kaafu Atoll respectively (Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2008, 2010). Maafushi and Thulusdhoo, two islands sites in Kaafu Atoll selected for data collection were predominately fisher-based communities until 2010 when guesthouses were allowed to be opened in local inhabited islands (Respondent 40). However, they also operated souvenir shops, catering to occasional tourist visits from close-by resorts, with mainly imported souvenir items from South and South East Asia (Respondent 36).

4.4.2 Baa Atoll

Baa Atoll consists of 75 islands of which only 13 islands are inhabited by the local community. The total population of Baa Atoll is 8,919. A map of Baa Atoll showing the case study site with research islands and resorts are given in Figure 4-6. There are currently 12 tourist resorts on separate islands and 19 guesthouses operating on local community islands in the atoll (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). In terms the total national share of tourism bed capacity, the of Baa Atoll stands at 6.8 % with 1,700 beds in 2016 (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). The first tourist resort in Baa Atoll opened in 1983 (Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2008).

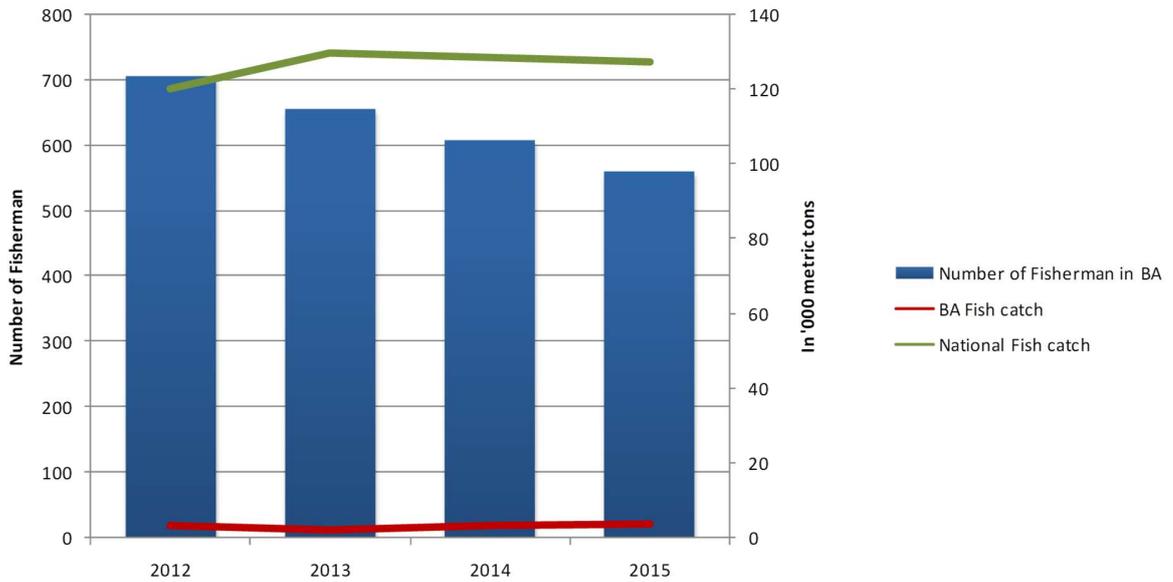


Figure 4-7 Baa Atoll Fisheries Sector

Source: (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019)

Traditionally Baa Atoll Thulhaadhoo was famous for lacquer wood work and other island communities were mainly engaged in tuna fishing, boat building and agricultural activities. Even though tourism was introduced in early 1980’s, communities were not linked to tourism, either in terms of employment or supplying local products (Respondent 58). There was a total of 656 and 559 fishermen in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Over the period of 2012 to 2015, the average fish catch in Baa Atoll (in ‘000 of metric tons) have been 3.2. Even though the recorded amount of Baa Atoll’s fish catch is not significant in terms of national fish catch as seen in Figure 4-7 above, fishing is the most important economic activity for these communities and have remain consistent throughout decades of its history.

After fishing, there are several important economic activities that these island communities engage in. Agriculture (producing watermelon, banana, lime, yam, sweet potato and various varieties of chillies) is one such economic activity that provides not only a livelihood (particularly for women) but also practised as a form of food security in the past. Several of these island communities in Baa Atoll engage in boat building as an activity and a skill that is passed from one generation to another. The recent introduction of guesthouses and its

operations provided an opportunity to diversify the economic development opportunities of these communities, despite several constraints highlighted in later chapters. These developments opened up opportunities for women to work at their own island.

4.4.3 Gaafu Alifu Atoll

Gaafu Alif Atoll is one of the two administrative divisions of the second largest natural atoll in the Maldives and traditionally called Huvadhoo Atoll (Figure 4-8). Out of the 82 islands, local island communities reside in only 10 islands with a total population of 8,477. Gaafu Alifu Atoll has currently 4 operational resorts and holds 2.3 % of national bed capacity which is 576 beds in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The first tourist resort was opened in the atoll in 2009 (Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2010).



Figure 4-8 Map of Gaafu Alifu Atoll

Source: (Google Earth)

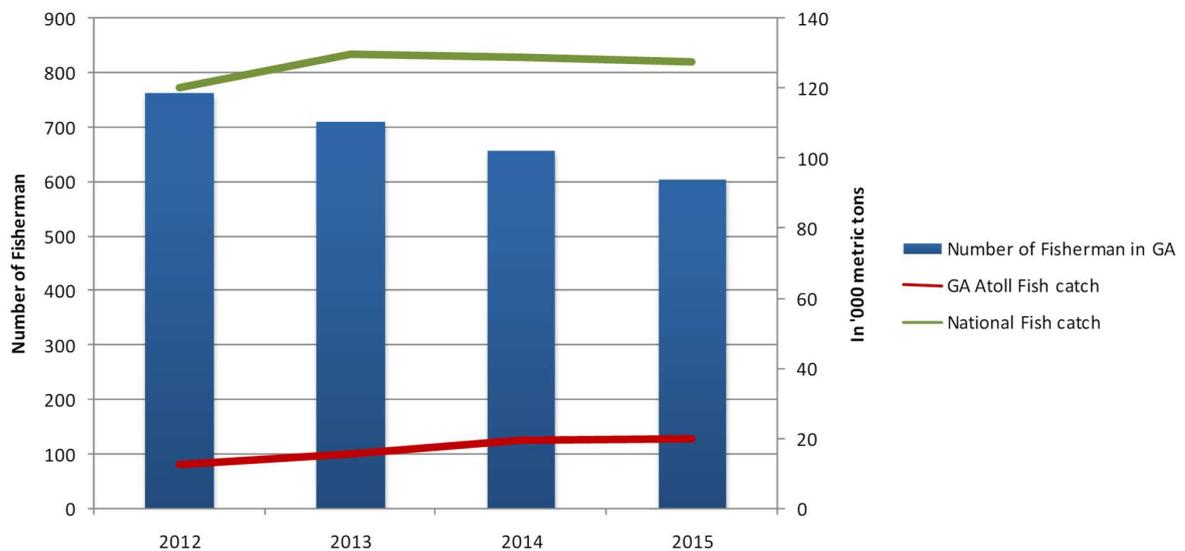


Figure 4-9 Gaafu Alif Atoll Fisheries Sector

Source: (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019)

The main economic activities on Gaafu Alif Atoll are fishing and agriculture. There are 604 fishermen and 20,000 metric tonnes of fish catch in 2015, which is 16 % of national fish catch in the same year as illustrated in Figure 4-9 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). With recent investments in a regional airport linking the central region to tourism resorts in operation since 2010, the potential to expand economic development opportunities to these communities has grown. However, the internal transportation network, electricity, safe water, banking and health care facilities in these islands communities is still lacking.

4.5 Society and Culture

Historians date the earliest settlement in the Maldives to be Aryan immigrants from South India and Sri Lanka in 4th and 5th Century BC (Pijpe et al., 2013). The Maldives is claimed to have a distinctly uniform culture for several centuries, originating from the mix of Sri Lanka, parts of India, Arabia, Indonesia and Africa (Whitehead, 1997). Such uniformity of cultural identity was due to the geographical location and prolonged periods of isolation. The Maldives is strategically located in the middle of Indian Ocean on a main trade route between the South East Asia and west and the natural atolls with their reef barriers played a pivotal role “to ferment undisturbed for several centuries” (Whitehead, 1997, p. 51). Geographic factors played

a pivotal role to form the Maldives culture that lead to the Maldives islands sharing a seemingly common culture, language, history and religion over its long history as a nation. Some of the islands, particularly in the south such as Gaafu Alif have their own distinct dialects, which is difficult to comprehend by islanders from elsewhere. However, Maldivian language called *Dhivehi* is used by all in the Maldives. Dhivehi as a language was believed to be of the same origins as Singhalese (Sri Lanka) and other South Indian languages such as Tamil, from Sanskrit (Kulikov, 2014). These languages had heavy influence on Dhivehi due to constant trade and people migrated between these societies from its earlier settlements (Maloney, 1976, 1980; Pijpe et al., 2013). The dialect spoken in Kaafu Atoll or the capital city Male' is widely spoken and used on official purposes due to its highly centralised form of governance since the beginning of a unified state.

Unlike other South Asian countries, contemporary Maldivian society enjoys “a high degree of homogeneity, without any caste distinctions” (Kulikov, 2014, p. 201). However, Kulikov (2014, p. 204) argues that earlier traces of a caste system such as the “elaborate structure of the social elite” is still preserved within the functioning of the society. It is argued that Dhivehi as a language provides the most important evidence of this preserved social hierarchy that is not evident on the surface level of the society at present (Faizal, 2005; Kulikov, 2014). Kulikov (2014) concludes that the dramatic on-going social and political changes in more recent years has not led to levelling of the imbalances between the social elites and the lower class. However, much of these research including Faizal (2005); Kulikov (2014) up to now has not investigated how the transformations of economic structures such as the transformation of fisheries-based economy to tourism based economy, have made changes to social structures, or vice versa. I argue in this thesis that the transformation of economic structure in the absence of inclusive institutions and opportunities to participate in political decision-making in a meaningful manner has led to the marginalisation of local island communities by the social elites (members of royal families who were referred as *Beyfulhun*) and the middle class (mostly traders who were referred as *Beykalun*) who, in the absence of democratic and inclusive institutions, flourished around the ruling families.

4.6 Islam and State

Historians argue the earliest settlers in the Maldives were Buddhists and Hindus from South India and Sri Lanka and therefore Buddhism was the predominant religion until 1153 (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). Although Hindus are believed to be among earliest settlers, its influence was significantly less compared to Buddhism (Kulikov, 2014). In 1153, with the growing influence of Arab traders in Indian Ocean, the Maldives embraced Islam, which then had a significant impact on the society, politics and culture of the Maldives in the later history (Ahmad, 2001; Kulikov, 2014). The single most determining influence on all aspects of Maldivian life is Islam and it continues to play a critical role in the contemporary period in shaping every aspect of the society from private life to policy making.

Islam is the fundamental sources of law in the Maldives, despite more recent changes to the constitution with a mixture of English Common Law and principles of traditional Islamic law (Einfeld, 2005). The country's conversion to Islam has different contested stories and the historical evidence is scarce except for the fact, that the King and the ruling class conversion to Islam took place gradually (Ahmad, 2001). The state then propagated it to the outer island communities. This conversion would have been facilitated by the Arab travellers and spread of Islam to South India and Sri Lankan coastal area that were primarily the trading partners of Maldives traders (Mohamed, 2005b). Historical scholars argue that Maldives conversion to Islam occurred at different stages and had some resistance from outer islands (Ahmad, 2001). As such this gradual shift from Buddhism to Islam lead to changes in political and social changes that would have an impact on how the power was wielded in the society. Since the Maldives conversion to Islam, Kings and rulers have submitted to the laws of Sharia based on Quran and teachings of Prophet Mohamed (Ahmad, 2001). This meant state power is guided heavily by the religious text and rulings by religious scholars who are part of the Kings court. Despite their marginal presence in the political institutions, Islamic scholars played a critical role in this process (Wisham & Muneeza, 2011). It is further argued that this conversion meant that the state since then to this date secures its legitimacy by implementing Islamic Sharia or the Divine code (Wisham & Muneeza, 2011). At times some rulers were themselves Sharia scholars and based on their interpretation of Sharia they demanded absolute authority. This

shift in power gave immense power to the rulers and they could use Sharia in order wield its powers in the economic and social sphere of communities as discussed and argued in this thesis with regard to tourism.

4.7 Government and Democracy

The academic literature on history reveals the establishment of a monarch in the Maldives before the 3rd century BC. Every island had its own governance system that was determined by its elders and social elites (Mohamed, 2005a). Since the 3rd century BC, the Maldives had a long history of monarchies, who had absolute power and authority over the islands. The state headed by the *Rasgefaanu* (King) or on few occasions *Ranin* (Queens) was followed by the *Fandiyaaru* (Chief Justice). Each atoll had *Atholhu verin* (Atoll Chief) residing in the atoll capital island, who collected revenue and had an administrative law and order role for the King in the whole atoll (Maloney, 1980). Every inhabited island had *Katheeb* (Island Chief), sometimes larger islands had *Bodu Katheeb* (head Island chief) and *Kuda Katheeb* (Deputy Island Chief). Their role was to assist the Atoll Chief on the island on day-to-day matters. At the same time, every atoll had a junior judge called *Naibs* who was assigned by the King to enforce law at island level in the atolls (Maloney, 1980). In addition to these authorities directly assigned by King, *Mudhims* (Imams) of the mosque who were primarily scholars of Holy Quran, held a prominent role in all major decisions that were made at the island level (Maloney, 1980). They were not necessarily selected as Imams by the King, but mostly selected at the island level or atoll level based on their knowledge of Holy Quran (Respondent 20). In addition to these key individuals at atoll and island level, after 1980's, there were teachers and health staff appointed at each island from Male'. Governance changes that were initiated during President Amin's period (January 1, 1953 – August 21, 1953) led to the formation *Rashu Committee* (Island Committee) which then led to the formation of Atoll Development Committee (ADC), Island Development Committee (IDC), and Women's Development Committee (WDC) in a formal manner in 1980's (Hussain, 2013). These individuals and committees constituted the power and authority at atoll and island level until 2010 when the decentralisation policy was implemented and local councils were established replacing Atoll chiefs with Atoll councillors and Island chiefs with Island councillors in all islands who were elected by the atoll and island communities respectively. The WDCs continued to be part of the local governance institutions on an island with members elected by the community instead

of appointed from the centre. These governance institutions are examined within this thesis in relation to inclusiveness and participation of tourism-sector-related decision making and how the communities are provided the opportunity to benefit from its development.

The prehistoric social and political setting plays a pivotal role in current social and political structure of the Maldives. Monarchical rule in the Maldives was based on an elaborate structure of social elites (Najeeb & Barrett, 2016), and the existence of inherited nobility that have originated from the first kingdom that was established by son of *King Brahamaadittiya*, a ruler of *Kalinga* in India and other subsequent kings from different dynasties (Kulikov, 2014; Mohamed, 2002, 2005a). These different families of nobilities and social elites ruled the Maldives under seven different dynasties over the course of the monarchy history (Mohamed, 2002). After the several years rule of monarchy, in 1932 a constitutional monarchy was established (Najeeb & Barrett, 2016). Growing tensions among the different families of nobles halted the constitutional monarchy for a short period in 1953. At this point the first constitutional republic was established by President Mohamed Amin Didi. However, this change came to a sudden halt after ten months and the monarchy was re-established, that also sparked a series of clashes within the social elites in Male' (Hussain, 1997). After 15 years, in 1968, the Maldives became a republic again for the second time with the President Ibrahim Nasir. Since then, the Maldives have been a constitutional republic. In addition to the domestic political tensions within ruling families, these historical changes are believed to be stimulated by foreign forces such as British, Portuguese, India and Dutch, whose interest in the Maldives in its strategic trade route in the Indian Ocean (Hussain, 2013). Britain, unlike other foreign powers, had a sustained influence until the late years of President Nasir's term in office. British interests in Indian Ocean lead to a treaty with the Maldives government in 1887 (Naseer, 1998). This treaty gave the British immense influence in the Indian Ocean and the Maldives. However as per this treaty Britain had to protect the Maldives from any foreign power, while the treaty also stipulated the Maldives monarchy of its sovereignty on domestic matters such as changes in legislature and other local politics. Although such a treaty was made, historians argue that British influence in local politics grew and it culminated in government of the Maldives negotiating for formal independence which was obtained on 26th July 1965 (Naseer, 1998). This ended the "dependency relationship" that British had with the Maldives since 1886 (Kumar, 2012, p. 279). Domestic politics were and currently remain intertwined with the global

politics due to its strategic location and interest from global powers such as the United Kingdom, then the Soviet Union, India and China (Kumar, 2012).

The evolved form of elite-based politics in the Maldives and the influence of social elites in transiting from a monarch to a republic, gave vast powers to the president as the head of the state as per the Maldives constitution prior to 2008. As such, I argue, those elites who were marginalised during President Gayoom (November, 11 1978 – November, 11 2008) also played an important role in the country's gradual transition into a multi-party democratic system over a course of five decades that led to the first multi-party election in 2008. This nuance provides an explanation in Chapter 6, about why, despite democratic reform, tourism decisions were made behind closed doors and local communities were continued to be marginalised to this date.

Although rarely argued in the few political literature that is available on the Maldives, I argue that all three presidents serving as heads of state, President Mohamed Amin (January to August 1953), President Ibrahim Nasir (served as the Prime Minister from 1957 to 1968, President 1968 to 1978) and President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (1978 to 2008) played major roles during their term in office that led up to the democratisation of the Maldives, although their regimes were heavily autocratic. Despite President Mohamed Amin only ruled for a short period, his transformative policy of introducing modern education to all islands, empowering women by creating WDCs, forming of the first political party (though it ended with his presidency) and restructuring island communities by giving them more voice in the policy making in Male' all could be said as the first phase of democratisation (Hussain, 2013; Hussain, 1997). These swift reforms were heavily resisted by social elites within the Male' and thus lead to a coup in August 1953 and a violent attack on the President Amin that led to injuries and his death later in isolation in one of the then uninhabited island (Hussain, 2013). More recent historians' narratives argue that social elites including the *Beykalun* and *Beyfulhun* played a key role in the process that forged a close bond that continued to the second republic (Hussain, 2013).

Following President Amin's short period of first republic and then monarchical rule, President Ibrahim Nasir consolidated powers in the Male', maintained autocratic rule for next ten years (Hussain, 2013). Tourism was introduced by three local elites; careful interventions by the

government such as, development of an international airport played a pivotal role (Rasheed, 2015). The connection between these elites and President Nasir (Some of the elites were his relatives, another his business partner) contributed to establishing case in context. Prior to the introduction of tourism, the Maldives economy was primarily based on small scale fishing and exporting dried fish to Sri Lanka (Ellis, 1998). Subsequently, in 1978, President Gayoom followed these reforms by his predecessors (President Amin and President Nasir) on education, community development and tourism development for the next 30 years. At the same time President Gayoom maintained and strengthened autocratic rule with policies that lead to heavy dependence on Male' as the centre for political and economic power until his last few years of his final term in office Presidency. His three decades-long presidency is described as a continuation of "suppression of freedom of speech and political repression...police brutality and other human rights violation...allegation of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention without proper trail" from his predecessors (Henderson, 2008, p. 103). While such an authoritarian form of governance continued, he brought swift economic reform in his early years in office especially to the fisheries sector with the mechanisation of fishing vessels, establishment of state-owned fisheries processing plants and initiating the fish export to Europe, Japan and other markets. However, these reforms in the fisheries sector except mechanisation of fishing vessels did not benefit island communities for two reasons, which were solely dependent on fisheries as the main economic activity. First, the state held a monopoly on buying fresh fish from the communities at marginal rates compared to the international market price (Respondent 28). Second, corruption within the government and state own enterprises led to siphoning off these profits to politicians and government bureaucrats (Respondent 28).

Demand for democratic reform came as a result of number of factors. In the few years prior to the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, there were several factors that contributed to the political unrest of 2003 which changed the momentum of political and governance reform (Musthaq, 2014; Shaheed & Upton, 2008). These were a bulging youth population, rapid urbanisation, an increase in foreign university educated graduates returning to the Maldives, increase in social injustice, and growing inequality between Male' and outer island communities. Combined, the call for a strong social and political movement for immediate democratisation intensified. Coinciding with these political demands, the 2004 Tsunami resulted in heavy infrastructure and economic damages and left the regime of President

Gayoom politically weak and vulnerable. The tourism sector was severely hit by the tsunami and left a serious dent on the fiscal side of the government which opened a window of opportunity for the international community, which was supporting democratisation of the country (Shaheed & Upton, 2008), to more actively intervene. Gayoom's regime was forced to consider to political reform as key partners in Europe and elsewhere made political reform a condition of tsunami reconstruction aid (Musthaq, 2014). With these events unfolding, political parties were allowed to register and function in the Maldives in June 2005 (Musthaq, 2014). The opposition was led by Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) that gradually garnered members of parliament (MPs) in the legislative assembly that was elected to amend the constitution. With the growing opposition, protests and a strong stand by MPs in parliament, swift changes were made to the constitution with historical changes in the separation powers of executive, judiciary and parliament in August 2008 (Rasheed, 2012). These changes lead to the establishment of independent institutions such as Supreme Court and Auditor General's office. These shifts in power within the social, political and economic sphere in the Maldives paved its way to the first multi-party election in late 2008, which was won by opposition leader President Mohamed Nasheed on November 2008 (Rasheed, 2012).

These reforms followed further changes in policy such as the first Decentralisation Act in 2010, that allowed for the first local elections in February 2011, second local elections in January 2014 and third local elections May 2017 among the island communities and changes in the governance of these communities (UNICEF, 2013). In 2011 the parliament allowed taxation that promised changes in addressing gaps in the development of island communities in terms of basic facilities. These political reforms have caused much political, economic and social changes and dynamics within island communities.

Under the new constitution, several basic rights were guaranteed; multi-party elections were held and a new president was elected in 2008, followed by a new parliament being elected in 2009, local councils were elected in late 2010. However, the democratisation of the state was not deep enough to sustain reforms that were brought within these few years. Simultaneous changes in taxation, decentralisation, and introduction of equitable social schemes to those marginalised and tourism regulations all lead to the first democratically elected government lose its support from social elites whose power was challenged by these changes. Such swift

changes in governance without addressing the configuration of social elites' power and institutional arrangements within the state, led to President Nasheed being forced to resign after a police and defence force mutiny on 7th February 2012. Under these controversies in the transfer of powers from President Nasheed to his Vice President, who had political support of President Gayoom's party as well as the police and defence force, the new president remained in office until the end of 2013. Within these two years, major regulatory changes that favoured the tourism sector were introduced (and are fully discussed in chapter six) but civil rights were violated using the police, the defence force and the judiciary to maintain the stability of new regime after the coup. Freedom of expression was suppressed using violence and physical intimidation increased culminating in a member of parliament being murdered brutally in 2012 and a journalist going missing and believed to be murdered in 2013.

Within such a repressive and authoritarian environment, 2013 presidential elections were held. The first round of elections was annulled by the Supreme Court citing irregularities in the voting. In the final round of election in November 2013, half-brother of President Gayoom, Yameen Abdul Gayoom, who also served in senior positions of President Gayoom's regime, was elected as the President. In the subsequent years following by these dramatic political changes and challenges in the infancy of democratisation in the Maldives, the country retracted its achievements on freedom of expression indicators, corruption indicators and other political, social and economic indicators. Reporters without Borders indicated that the Maldives has continuously slid down in World Press Freedom index since 2010. According to the annual survey and report by Freedom House (2016) political pluralism and participation and freedom of expression have worsened in the last five years. Since the 2013, political violence, corruption and rule of law indicators have all deteriorated as per World Bank Governance indicators (World Bank, 2016). Such a situation led to retractive changes in the constitution such as the restriction of freedom of expression and assembly and amendments in various regulations such a limiting the power of island councils through changes in decentralisation law, transfer of environmental impact assessment powers to Ministry of tourism and community development projects as discussed in chapter 6 (Transparency Maldives, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c).

In summary, the historical and contemporary politics of the country, except for few brief periods, can be characterised by oligarchic system of rule and the Maldives system of governance as patrimonial and patriarchal. The Maldives is governed in a way which is still a long way from an inclusive and democratic system of governance once imagined in the early 2000s. In most instances, citizen participation in decision making is absent and not deemed necessary by those who control the system of rule. Although the tourism development brought about an opportunity to catalyse political arena for a more democratic system and greater participation that could then create more socially just and economic opportunities for outer island communities, the manner in which tourism policies are formulated and implemented have hindered such as positive process.

4.8 Political Economy Before Tourism

The Maldives is a highly centralised economy where all land (islands and lagoons) were owned by the central government from the beginning (Shakeela & Weaver, 2016). Throughout the history we can see that feudal arrangements were made between the state, which was controlled by social elites and the islanders based on social and political status. As per these arrangements Sultans demanded two types of taxes from the holder of the land. These taxes were called *Vaaru* (head tax) and *Varuva* (produce tax) (Bell, 1929). These were paid in kind to the centre and sustained the centre at the expense of island communities (Respondent 20). However, much of this disproportionate tax on islands or land given on *vaaru* or *Varuva* were allocated to social elites in Male' or an elite in atoll capital such as Atoll Chief, these islands or land were then taken care of by islanders who benefitted marginally, but had day-to-day autonomy of the running of this island or land with few resources to sustain his family living (Respondent 20).

Commerce and politics have been intertwined in the Maldives from the very beginning of its history. It has also been heavily influenced by the various global players that shaped the internal dynamics to form a society that we see today. It would be misconception to claim that the start of tourism connected the Maldives commerce and politics to global players, which then influence the design of social and economic systems. An excellent illustration of the Maldives before independence in 1965 and tourism development in 1972 is given by Maloney (1980) as quoted below. "All the centuries of foreign contact, since the time of conversion,

have produced scant change in the basic pattern of culture in the Maldives. Since the 1880s there has been some increase in prosperity and in consumption, particularly in the capital, because of the presence of the *Bohra* merchants and Pax Britannica. in the 200 populated islands, the colonial period brought little change, and least of all to society and religion. It has remained for the 1970s to fully draw the Maldives into the irresistible suction of the modern world” (Maloney, 1980, pp. 129-130).

Maloney (1980) argued that the *Bohra* merchants started the first modernisation process in the Maldives by linking these isolated islands with the South Asian trade. At the same time Maloney (1976) also argued that Maldivians traded as far with Chinese merchants much before the *Borah* merchants establish their presence in the country. Trade in the Maldives has always been centralised in Male’ and controlled by the Sultans. However, with *Bohra*’s gradual consolidation of trade in the Maldives, achieving absolute monopoly led to conflicts with the social elites. Further these traders where Shi’a Muslim from Mumbai and Colombo, while Maldivians associated themselves as Sunni, which also played a role in restricting their social activities in the Maldives from the beginning. With the increasing disagreement and conflicts with *Bohra* merchants, government established *Bodu Stores*, that reduced the monopoly of *Bohra*’s and eventually expelled them from the Maldives in 1950’s by the President Nasir. It was argued that *Bohra* merchants were influencing the politics and thus certain social elites’ discontent with their presence and monopoly in trade. I argue that this marked a critical turning point of the Maldives political economy towards a new direction of state economic policies and the rise of local traders who then started to influence politics. It also led to an economy that struggled for its survival for the next two decades with mounting debts to its foreign traders. While these changes in the economy were taking place Britain successfully pressured the sultan to allow them to build a Royal Air Force Base in one of the southernmost islands of the Maldives called *Gan*. The Sultan came to a 100 year lease agreement with Britain, which was allegedly signed without consulting the social elites in Male’ (Naseer, 1998). These further increased political tensions and eventually the agreement was then renegotiated between 1958 and 1959, under the new Prime Minister, Ibrahim Nasir, but they failed to agree on its stipulated terms and thus previously agreed agreement was terminated (Naseer, 1998). Maldives continues to occupy a crucial place in the Indian Ocean geopolitics; connecting to Pacific region with its trade routes and strategic position for all major powers, especially china

more recently (Kondapalli, 2018). Meanwhile, between these heated tensions between the Maldives and Britain, the southern three atolls were looming in secessionist sentiments, primarily due to their dissent over the centralised trade policies that forced these communities to first stop their cargo vessels in Male' and pay a tax. They had more autonomy than any other part of the country in their direct trade with India and Sri Lanka and prior to the establishment of the Maldives Government Bodu Store monopoly on the export of the Maldives fish in the South of the Maldives. These changes in trade policy led most of the Southern islanders who were not engaged in fishing to work at the British base. While the government disagreements with Britain mounted, the Maldives government banned Maldivians from working in the British base in Gan. This further increased the dissent of Southern communities that is believed to have led to the growing secessionist movement. In 1959, the United Suvadiva Islands Republic, consisting of three southern atolls was proclaimed. This followed a struggle between Britain, Male' and the Southern Atoll's island communities that were relatively well-off compared to others in the subsistence economy due to their direct trade (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). All efforts by Britain to negotiate with President Nasir failed. President Nasir responded with brutal force against the capital of Huvadhu Atoll, Island of Thinadhoo, and made arrests, burned boats, evacuated the population the whole island in half a day in 1962. President Nasir then later agreed to a deal with the British that included payments approaching 1,000,000 pounds for a 30-year lease retroactive to 1956 (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). This new deal legitimised the British position, thereby undercutting any need they had for secessionist leaders. By 1964, not only had the Male' government quelled the secessionist movement, but the British intervention in national affairs had also hastened the demand for complete political independence. The protectorate agreement was dissolved after 78 years without serious confrontation from the Britain and the Maldives became a formally independent nation on 25th July of 1965 (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). These events left the South and other outer islands without any political power over the centrally controlled elites in Male'.

The economy was dependent on fisheries sector and its heavy reliance on Sri Lanka as primary market for its exports and imports. The decision of the Sri Lankan government to drastically reduce the purchase of the Maldives fish in 1972 brought the country into a financial crisis. Amidst this crisis, President Nasir decided to introduce Maldives tourism industry to diversify the economy.

4.9 Transformation of Political Economy After Tourism

Prior to the introduction of tourism, the Maldives was little known to the international community and modernisation or any other forms of development were unknown to these islands. Except for the capital Male' and few islands in South such as the *Gan Island*, Maldivians were all living extremely remote from outside world. These outer islands had a subsistence economy that rarely relied to Male' for basic services, but was politically controlled by the Sultans and later Presidents via its control over the resources of these atolls (Phadnis & Luithui, 1981). Since the development of the tourism sector in 1972, tourism in the Maldives has developed formidably to become the driving force behind the economic development of the Maldives over the past four decades. The volume of tourist arrivals has increased by an impressive average annual growth of 7.3 %, from about 114,500 in 1985 to more than 1,484,274 in 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). At the same time, tourist accommodation capacity has increased from less than 6,000 bed spaces in 1985 to almost 44,924 beds in 2018, of which 31,741 beds is from resort islands (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). From the 1980s to 2015, the Maldives has achieved substantial development in terms of its GDP per capita growth rate (World Bank, 2016). It has increased from US\$ 268.3 in 1980 to US\$ 9,541 in 2018. While the tourism sector accounts for 29 % of the total GDP, it is estimated it could account more than 60 % of the total GDP indirectly with its related sectors such as construction, transport and others as illustrated by the Figure: 4-10 (Maldives Monetary Authority, 2015; National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

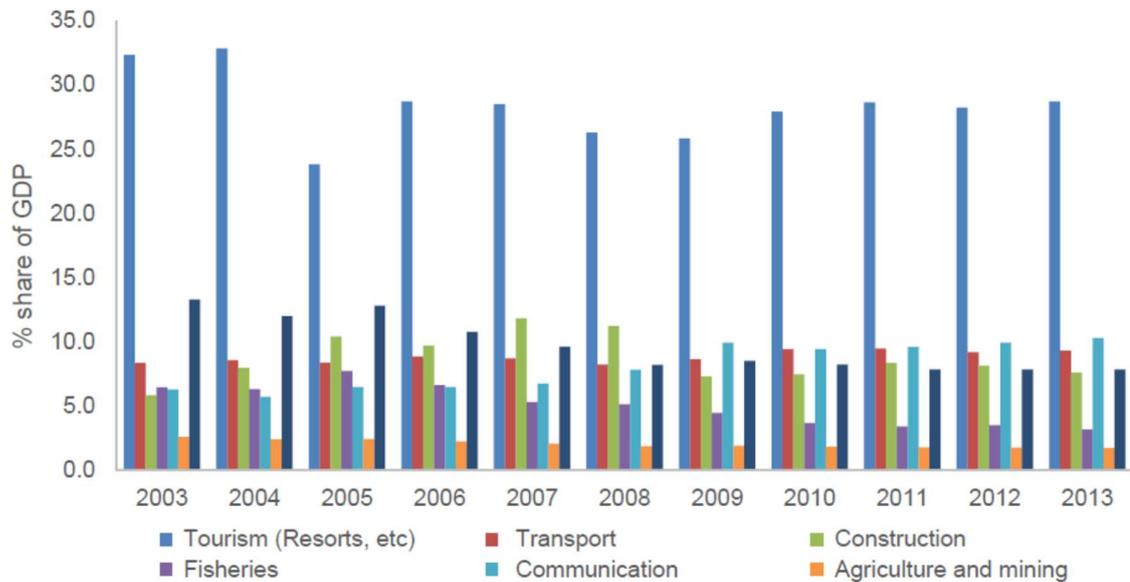


Figure 4-10 Share of main sectors to GDP

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

Two indirect taxes (namely, import duty and tourism tax), and resort rents were the main source of government revenue until 2010 tax reforms. The tourism sector accounts for approximately two-third of the government's total revenue in 2010 and became the largest source of public revenue. It constituted taxes imposed directly and indirectly on tourists, such as customs duties imposed on goods imported by the industry, resort lease rent paid for use of government owned resort islands. The Presidential elections in 2008 made the tax reform became more urgent. The new government embark on its ambitious programme of extensive social welfare reform, and to improve the state of public finances, by increasing revenue and reducing expenditure by reducing inefficient civil service. The year 2011 marked the beginning of the modern tax system in the Maldives with the introduction of GST and BPT. The GST Act was passed and rectified by the President in 2011. As such GST Act levies 12 % in the tourism sector and 6 % in the general sector. Additional tax called Green tax was levied from November 2015 at the rate of US\$ 6 per day for each day of tourist stay at a tourist resort, tourist hotel or on a tourist vessel operated in the Maldives and at a US\$ 3 per day on tourists who stay in guesthouses.

Tourism is estimated to generate US\$ 334 million per annum in direct government revenue from Goods and Services Tax (GST) and income from lease rents from resort islands. This

corresponds to 40 % of total government revenue of about US\$ 844 million in 2015 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In addition, the tourism sector contributes indirectly to government revenue through taxation of other sectors such as construction and transport. The tourism sector accounts for more than 60 % of foreign income earning (Maldives Monetary Authority, 2015). However, the sector accounts for only a fifth of total employment for local population in the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

The major income source available at islands outside the tourism sector is fisheries sector. It is estimated that this sector accounts for less than 3.7 % of GDP in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Fishing is an important part of Maldivian lifestyle. It is the main source of protein and remains the primary industry for most island communities. It is also an important economic activity as fish is the main export for Maldives other than tourism. According to Sinan and Whitmarsh (2010), Maldivians are among the highest consumers of fish as a protein source with per capita fish consumption at 181 kg/year. Fisheries are a key primary productivity sector making up 3.5 % of the GDP in 2015 and contributed to approximately 20 % of the domestic employment among the island communities, with over 14,500 fishers. In 1978, the fisheries contribution to the GDP was estimated at about 22 %, by 1999 this figure had decreased to 6.5 % and currently it stands at 3.5 % of GDP (MPND, 2007; National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Although this reduction of fisheries sector contribution to the GDP with the initiation of the tourism sector, it remains to be critical sector for the island communities.

At this point, it has been important to highlight the forces and the socio-political and economic environment in which tourism development shaped in the first decade led to Maldives adopting enclave tourism product. In describing such enclave qualities, “resort hotels are thus nodes within tourist systems that include airports and aeroplanes, sight-seeing tours, restaurants, emporia and attractions. These spaces tend to be connected by smooth, rapid, air-conditioned travel that maximise mobility but minimise social contact with the world outside” (Kothari, 2015, p. 249). These qualities perfectly describe how tourist experience is branded and marketed, with absolutely little connection with local communities. Each tourist resort in the Maldives is a separate island with a designated lagoon boundary which is exclusive property of the resort owner or management. One or two resort islands management operate their employees’ accommodation facilities on close-by inhabited islands. Some resort managements

may have arrangements to buy few agricultural produce or fish from close-by islanders, but all such arrangements are purely voluntary and the resort management can revoke such arrangement at any time. Scheyvens (2011, p. 157) argues further that “the way tourists have been discouraged from visiting inhabited islands” and restricting locals visiting resorts, especially foreign operated resorts leading to disenfranchising society and limiting multiplier effects of tourism. These arrangements also have alienated the local communities and have produced conflicts that have been ignored by both government and local communities. Local communities who face such issues are often fishermen and women, but they are powerless and need tourist resorts in their neighbourhood for employment and as a reluctant market for their produce. More recent changes in determining lagoon boundaries and lease of lagoons in the Tourism Act further marginalise these communities as they have no property rights over uninhabited islands and its lagoons.

4.10 Environmental Challenges

Prior to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, vulnerability of the Maldives to anthropogenic climate change and environment degradation issues was thought to be moderate and unnoticeable. But since then, issues like waste disposal, coral bleaching, longer period without rain and severe beach erosion issues have become more acute. Out of 188 inhabited islands, 41 islands reported severe beach erosion issues in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). These issues are faced by both local communities as well as tourist resorts. Concurrently within the expansion of both government projects in outer atolls and tourism sector, number of activities such as sheet piling, sand dredging, coral mining, and uprooting of palms have led to negative outcomes. These damaging impacts are mostly felt by local communities, specially by fishing communities whose bait grounds being lost due to new land reclamation or tourism led activities. Despite these issues scholars argue that both public sector as well as the tourism sector fails to properly account for the cost on local communities due to environmental changes they bring about (Niyaz & Storey, 2011). Further Niyaz and Storey (2011) argues that policies and strategies that are implemented by both government and tourist sector occurs in the absence of democratic representation. Although this assertion is not surprising as much of the tourism decisions are found lacking island community participation.

4.11 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the context of the Maldives to situate tourism development and its local communities. The chapter gives a brief geographic and people background, followed by discussion on the economic development condition of outer islands communities. The chapter then closely examines each of the three study sites that are used as cases for the level local community participation in tourism development. Each of them provides a unique context in our understanding of perceived benefits of tourism and power relationships that are examined in later chapters. The chapter also discusses on the society and culture, which provides a deeper understanding of these three communities. Furthermore, the transformations of state from a monarch to republic and then ups and downs of road to a democracy from an authoritarian government are examined to understand the room for deliberative democratic and inclusive environment. At the same time the chapter examines the role Islam in played in moulding the state it its contemporary juncture. The political economy of the Maldives before and after tourism is briefly examined to understand the transformations at a macro level. Finally, it discusses the environmental challenges that these communities face amidst all the changes in the last few decades. The following chapter examines the literature on tourism development and participation to inform the conceptualisation of inclusive tourism development in the context of a SIDS.

Chapter 5 Tourism Policy Making in Maldives from 1972-1995

The island officials are quick to carry out government orders for fear of summary dismissal and banishment. They are appointed from Male', but often with the recommendation of the Atoll Chief. There is some evidence that in the far north headmen used to be elected, but elsewhere people never heard of such a thing; in the southern islands important positions used to be essentially hereditary, though confirmed by the Male' government. (Maloney, 1976, p. 659)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 raised the idea that the prevailing planning and decision-making processes of the tourism industry and government have been established as a result of a range of historical, religious, social, and political practices and context. As such the context chapter provided a general understanding of three atoll communities used for this study. Furthermore, I argue that the transformations of the state from a monarchy to a republic the second time was sustained with the transformation that transpired with the modernisation of the economy and the dominant role that the tourism sector played in the period. Consequently, the tourism sector was instrumental in sustaining an authoritarian form of governance in the Maldives for 3 decades as will be explained in Chapter 5 and 6 Those who entered the industry late wanted a more equal footing with existing elites and this pushed the country towards fierce resistance for democracy. This provides a clear context to examine how to construct the space for deliberative democratic tourism development, if tourism could become true vehicle for development for local communities.

Chapter 4 discussed local island communities, particularly the three atoll communities within the context of the Maldives and their transformation after tourism. The chapter covered socio-political and economic conditions with a discussion on economic development opportunities and environmental challenges faced by local communities. The chapter helped to describe the context in which tourism development progressed. How local communities are marginalised amidst tourism development has gradually percolated into development literature, but the manner in which socio-political and economic conditions that prevailed pre-tourism era wove

neatly into embroiled tourism policies after it became the engine of economic growth by taking into consideration the specific SIDS context, is limited in the literature.

This chapter addresses how the beginning of production of tourism policy in the Maldives is a contested terrain that has rarely been questioned. It examines who gained and who lost in the process within the multiple power relations and scales at which these complex relationships produced and reproduced unjust socio-political, economic and environmental conditions. In fact I go further in this chapter to argue that the marginalisation goes back to pre-tourism, which then, within these entangled power relations and socio-economic conditions, produced a tourism industry that is largely controlled by neoliberal forces, or more specifically the tourism local elites and multinational cooperations that produced their own narrative of sustainable tourism development. To do so, the chapter examines the factors that influence policy and how these influences are interrelated to set a direction that led to the socio-political, economic and ecological environment for marginalising the local communities in the TDP in the Maldives.

The chapter outlines consist of five thematic sections with sub-sections. In the first section I discuss briefly the conceptualisation of tourism planning and planning the tourism era in the Maldives. Second, I discuss the influences, power relations, key institutions and actors from 1970s to 1995. This section includes an examination of conditions that led to tourism development in the Maldives. The third section discusses how laissez-faire economics and political turmoil created the conditions that led to the emergence of institutions uniquely fitted to elite-led tourism development. In the fourth section, I analyse and discuss various controls and regulations that emerged as result of negotiations between government and tourism elites in the absence of local communities. This culminated into the First Tourism Master Plan. Finally, a summary of main findings is provided.

5.2 Tourism Policy Making

Liasidou (2018) highlights that, “political power and public policy are intertwined with the actors and their ideas in any specific period of time which influence the decisions taken for particular issues” (p. 73). This chapter takes us through such key actors who shaped the industry through interviews with them and document analysis; their ideas in different but interlinked time frames. Several scholars have argued that, in tourism planning and policy

making, the concerns and needs of local communities are marginalised and tourists and tourist businesses' interests are what shape these plans and policies (Krutwaysho & Bramwell, 2010; Liasidou, 2018; Moscardo, 2011).

Data analysis, as discussed in this chapter and Chapter 6, showed four different time frames for the 45 years of tourism development in the Maldives.

5.2.1 Planning the tourism era

At the start of the chapter, the extract from Maloney (1976) anthropological study conducted between 1974 and 1975 provides us a glimpse of the political outlook of the Maldives during the period that led towards tourism development. The introduction of tourism in 1972 is a significant event, a point bifurcation in the history of the Maldives. The period since 1972, the year that marked the beginning of tourism in the Maldives, has seen a fundamental restructuring of the Maldives economy which brought a radical shift in the roles and responsibility of government. Meanwhile, the social and political structure remained intact for 30 more years. During this time, the neoliberalisation of an elitist-based society saw the gradual shifting of power from these highly centralised and elitist few royal families, whose rule consolidated power over more than 198 islands spread across the Indian Ocean, to a new generation of tourist resort owners. They wove a super new socio-political and economic structure that supported the profitability and premium brand image of the tourism industry, while maintaining the centralised nature of the state. As such, this structure produced a fusion of interests and interdependence between the government and private sector (tourism) as illustrated in this chapter. This chapter and Chapter 6 argue that this was also very much a centralised project. Collaboration and participation did not extend to the local communities and evidence from the fieldwork and document analysis shows little interdependence and collaboration or attempts to forge partnerships with local communities in an equitable and inclusive manner by the government and tourism sector. Instead they were left to the mercy of a powerful centre and tourist resort owners. In terms of mundane daily governance, the power of the technocratic, corporate, centre materialised a series of sector policies, master plans, and regulations and laws that changed how these communities live and survive. I argue that, at the core of this governance structure, over a 45-year period of development of tourism, lies four tourism master plans that guided and plotted its course and direction. The formulation of all

the four master plans in particular were largely driven by European consultants and donors, whose image of local community was from a tourist point of view. These master plans lacked empowerment of local communities for sustainable tourism development. The first plan of tourism and later plans rarely mentioned how local communities and their culture could be positioned within one of the most expensive tourism products. More importantly, these communities were not viewed as partners in development.

The sections that follow in this chapter examine the factors that have influenced the formulation of these TDPs and the way they have been implemented. The chapter examines how planning and plans have evolved over the last four master-planning periods, focusing attention on the direction they have set for the marginalisation of local communities in the TDP in the Maldives as illustrated in Chapter 7. By understanding how such processes work, Chapter 8 expands on how these three key stakeholders (government, tourism business owners and local communities) can collaborate to produce a mutually beneficial system of governance that is complex, dynamic, and interdependent on each other to help local communities develop in an inclusive manner and protect the environment at the same time.

5.3 Influences, Power Relations, Key Institutions and Actors from 1984–1995

A vibrant sector that dominates every sphere of Maldivian life today was once a sector that was left on its own to develop and was not positively viewed due to social and religious stigma that was attached to it and partly due to social stratification that prevailed before its inception. The government, controlled by social elites, took no interest in interfering in the sector until they saw the potential to harness it for wielding power and started seeing the transformations of the social and economic sphere in the late 1970s. Prior to the introduction of tourism, Maldives was primarily a traditional economy based on fishing and fish products that were produced within local communities were the main export item in exchange for all goods including basic staple foods which were imported such as rice, flour and sugar. A brief discussion of conditions that led to tourism development highlights the nature of tourism in the Maldives and how it evolved into the current form.

5.3.1 Conditions that led to tourism development

When addressing the question of how the tourism sector began its operation in the Maldives and how it sustained and evolved into its current state of ownership by an exclusive group of

individuals and multinational companies with enclave resort islands, it is important to understand that the current enclave tourism policies not only physically disconnect local communities from tourism, but these policies are marginalising local communities. I argue that one needs to be context-sensitive and understand the historical event, scales, and access to natural resources.

Although the Maldives swiftly transitioned back from a Sultanate (monarchy) to a Republic for the second time in November 1968 (Maloney, 1976, p. 657), Rasheed (2014, p. 8) argues that the governance system that moulded in this political process was based on an “undemocratic constitutional foundation,” where the government was highly centralised and controlled by political elites in Male’. Under this constitution, a presidential nominee is debated and voted in the Majlis (parliament) and then the presidential candidate that gets the highest vote goes for a public referendum. This indirect process of electing a president remained intact until public unrest and the call for democratic reform that led to the 2008 multi-party elections under a new constitution.

Although a president is elected in this process, his nomination and his ability to maintain a politically stable government depended on these very elites. These political elites could belong to any of these three groups or an intersection of two groups or all three groups: Beyfulhun (members of royal family), Beykalun, who control resources such as uninhabited islands, and Dhanabeykalun (Islamic scholars), who were held at high regard by the local community who believed that these scholars have the true authority to interpret Quran and Hadith. As such these three elite groups who held royal status, resources and religious knowledge had a huge influence in nominating a name for presidency to the parliament. In a few instances, some elites may belong to an intersection of two of these groups or may belong to all three due to marriages that were made to forge such power (Respondent 20).

Scholars argue that practices and relationships of the Sultanate towards the British colonial rule and Vora traders (from Mumbai, India) in the late 19th and early 20th century continued to shape the rent seeking and mis-governance of socio-economic activities by subsequent governments (Rasheed, 2014). Scholars also highlighted the government as highly authoritative and repressive against those who dissented against these elites who were at the capital Male’ (Colton, 1995). Therefore, scholars argue that, when tourism was initiated, the

system that prevailed in the Maldives led to problems in development which can be attributed to “governance failure” (Rasheed, 2014, p. 9).

Given the failure at the governance level of the system, that could not initiate modernisation of the economy (Rasheed, 2014), I argue that these socio-political and economic conditions set the environment for tourism to start its operation as an economic sector in the Maldives, without interference and hindrance by the government, while socio-religious factors were not in favour of tourism in the Maldives. Against these unfavourable conditions, there were three particular socio-political factors that played a more crucial role in facilitating tourism introduction.

First, the socialist economic policies of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka imposed heavy restrictions on Maldives fish exports in 1972 and eventually a ban on buying fish from Maldives, leading to serious fiscal issues and economic hardship (Kumar, 2012; Manik, 2010). When the tourism revenues started to bring in much-needed foreign exchange, given the economic situation, the government could not reject it, but nor did the government endorse it formally for the fear of uncertain socio-political and religious issues. Second, when the British finally left Gan due to difficult relations with government over the southern atolls separation issues (Hussain, 2013), this added further fiscal and foreign exchange burdens and challenges to managing the economy.

Finally, President Nasir’s source of power originated from the traders who constituted the middle rank: Beykalun, that were growing in prominence in the social strata, after he partially neutralised the highest rank: Beyfulhun, during the second republic. President Nasir himself ventured into the shipping business and later ventured into tourism with his trading partner and also the Vice President Koli Ali Maniku who was amongst this Beykalun group (Colton, 1995; Maloney, 1976). At the same time, his wife’s family, another Beykalun rank, with his in-laws, were also among the pioneers of the tourism industry (Colton, 1995). Therefore, given the sensitive political situation in Male’, he had to consolidate power amidst the elite struggle (Beyfulhun or the highest rank) for power and the return of the monarchy.

I would also argue that the hands-off policy of government also came from a lack of knowledge or proper understanding of tourism itself in its first few years and the belief that tourism was

viewed alien to the social and religious beliefs. Thus, the government was unsure how to respond to this new sector that was developing given the complex power relations that were fluid and not at the hands of any particular individual or group at this period. Given this context, tourism in the Maldives at the inception was unplanned and remained unregulated and driven largely by *laissez-faire* and had little support from the government until the First Tourism Master Plan (FTMP) in 1983 (Ministry of Tourism, 1983a, 1983b).

Although a factor not attributed to the Maldives, a major condition that set the stage for tourism development came from huge wave of change in Europe in 1960s. The “introduction of paid holiday for industrial workers, increase leisure time, disposable income for greater numbers of population and improvements in transportation lead to a phenomenal increase in tourist activity in the western world” (Connor & Cronin, 1993, p. 1) enabled tourists to visit one of the most remote locations from Europe, that produced a chain of events that changed the rest of the history producing winners and losers as an outcome.

5.4 Laissez-Faire and Political Turmoil: Pre-Master-Planning Period (1972-1983)

Data analysis of policy documents and interviews showed that the Maldives as a society during this period was heavily based on traditional beliefs and religious identity and was hierarchical. It also identified that a dominant discourse was at play using local newspaper articles and religious sermons that barred locals from intermingling with foreigners, creating a tourism based on enclave policy that is still followed (Bowen et al., 2016). Foreigners, especially non-Muslims, were viewed as dangerous and a threat (Colton, 1995). Such discourses were also, in the course of time, shaped by the extremely long period of isolation of the Maldives islands from the rest of the world and also the bitter experience of the Portuguese invasion (Maloney, 1980) and other foreign interventions. I argue that, at a deeper level, these dominant discourses played a critical role in shaping the initial tourism policy processes and to some extent still do, as a barrier to local community participation in TDP, and were later used by tourism elites as a form of tactic to control the TDP as illustrated in this chapter.

Due to conditions that led to tourism, as discussed in the previous section, years of isolation were not an option within the frames of the policy makers of this initial period. The transformative changes in technology in telecommunication and transportation in the late 1960s, 1970s and late 1980 played a critical role in determining the future of tourism in the

Maldives. As a remote island destination in the Indian Ocean, there was no regular transportation to and from the Maldives and her neighbours. Official telecommunication was based on Morse code between capital Male' and close-by neighbouring countries (Manik, 2010). The introduction of tourism and revenues earned from Maldives Shipping Limited's operation in South Asia enabled the government sufficient revenues to invest in satellite telecommunication and the development of an international airport in Kaafu Atoll (Manik, 2010). Further, the changes in shipping and cargo, reducing the cost of cargo and the time it took for transportation, enabled the infant tourism industry to be provided with basic food and other goods necessary for European tourists who wanted sun, sand and sea with their European flavours and beverages in the enclaved environment created for them as a paradise on earth. While such changes helped the tourism industry to take off as a successful business venture, these transformative changes denied proper community participation and voice, and led to the development of an extremely unequal society, where only the capital Male' had access to all basic services and improvement of quality of life.

5.4.1 Emergence of institutions

Scholars argue that tourism in the Maldives during this period developed in an unplanned and more than incidental manner (Dowling, 2000). Data suggest that there was no national tourism policy during this period. However, I would argue it was a period no different from all other master-planning periods, except the first master plan period where the government was much in control; in all other planning periods, tourism elites' control over the policy was seen to a greater degree. This laissez-faire period was important to understanding how that shaped tourism policies and institutional structures within the state with the interplay of economics and politics. The first formal institution that administered tourism activities was within an agency called Maldives Government Business Service (MGBS) in 1972; it had no regulatory powers, but assisted tourist businesses to register and establish and gather as much information about the sector. A key informant from President Nasir's administration highlighted that President Nasir, being an entrepreneur and coming from a political and entrepreneurial family, had an "eye for new opportunities and appetite for modernisation" (*Respondent 20*). But it is said that he would collect as much information as possible before taking a new step. As such the establishment of MGBS was primarily to collect information.

With the self-financed tourist islands and guesthouses in local community islands increasing rapidly, tourism emerged as a promising economic activity during this period. With the rapid growth in tourism and the inflow of much-needed foreign currency, in January 1976 the government decided to establish a separate agency called the Government Tourism Board, with the additional responsibility of advising the President on tourism-related matters. The board consisted of President Nasir and other senior ministers. In January 1977, it was changed to a department within the President's Office called Department of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism (DIBT). The following year, on March 1978, due to the growth of foreign investors who were keen on investing in this sector, the government decided to establish a Department of Tourism and Foreign Investment (DTFI) to facilitate such investments.

In 1979, the Tourism Act, Foreign Investment Act and several important laws came into effect in response to the rising importance of tourism. At this stage, the economic aspect of tourism was dominant compared to social, political and environmental aspects. This period culminated with the establishment, in November 1982, of a separate department within the President's Office called the Department of Tourism with the exclusive responsibility to regulate and administer all matters of tourism policy under the direction of the President.

The Tourism Act 1979 was a very simple Act that was enacted to govern the registration of tourist businesses, legally empowering government to collect information on tourist bed nights spent in the country. Other tourist activities were then established by the Ministry of Tourism including a legal mechanism to impose a levy of US\$6 per tourist per bed night. In addition, the law also stipulated that a tourist island leased by the government could only be recalled for national defence purposes, otherwise a 2-year period had to be given by the government to the tourist resort owner before terminating the lease agreement. There was no mention of how "Varuvaa" leased islands to local community chiefs or elites in Male' would be dealt with and no mention of local community at all.

5.4.2 Pioneers and the Maldives Association for Tourism Industry (MATI) influence

While such changes in institutions within tourism started to evolve at an early stage to reflect the influences from both local and foreign factors, it is also important to highlight the influence of former Vice President (1975–1978) and shipping business magnate Mr. Koli Ali Maniku and other local tourist resort owners such as his brother, Mohamed Umar Manik, Mr. Naseem,

and Mr. Champa Hussain Afeef as the pioneers and senior advisors to both President Nasir and President Maumoon in this period. Mr. Naseem, the brother-in-law of President Nasir, and his family's tourism business and other ventures ended soon after President Nasir's resignation and the appointment of President Maumoon due to the repression and political turmoil in the capital Male'. New tourism elites such as Mr. Qasim Ibrahim (owner and operator of five resorts who held several ministerial positions, was leader of a political party and also vice president of MATI) and Al-Amir Mohamed Waheed Deen (owner of a number of resorts, former Vice President of the Maldives and who held important ministerial posts such as Minister of Atolls Development) wielded immense power in shaping tourism policies. Therefore, one could argue that, even before MATI was established, government policies were influenced and developed at the behest of these tourism conglomerates.

The socio-economic and political conditions that these individuals emerged out of, and the education and personal experiences that these individuals had attained, ensured the success of the tourism industry in the Maldives. They fought their way to set-up a multi-million-dollar industry that had powerful ramifications and foot prints on the regulations that came later in this period and were an important lobby group, formally established as MATI, registered as an NGO in 1982. Prior to this formal institutional set up of MATI, these key pioneers were the primary movers and influencers of the sector policies other than the government. These influencers produced a model that moulded an industry that protects the environment that exclusively surrounds resort islands. Activities such as spear fishing bans and the spatial concept of a typical resort with maximum built-up area of 20 %, leaving other natural vegetation untouched, are positive outcomes in the regulations of these pioneers and interactions of early tourists. However, one could argue the absence of locals' community influence and disconnect in this transformation and thus their subsequent marginalisation was due to social, political and economic circumstances and the policy of a government that was not entirely sure if they wanted tourism to be a key industry in the Maldives.

Sharing the experience of how the industry began without any assistance from the government, and the kinds of activities that tourists were engaged in, a key pioneer (Respondent 22) recounts a familiar myth of opportunism and individual enterprise (see Box 5-1 and 5-2).

Box 5-1 Arrival of the first batch of tourists

We [Maldives] had nothing. It was mere coincidence this man called Mr. George Corbin (Italian traveller) came here, looking for new places. Because he was looking for bring new people here to shoot fish. Before coming to Maldives he went earlier to Bangaram island in India. Bangaram is an island that belongs to India. From there he has come to Colombo and he came here. And that's how we met him... We were just normal people living here, but we met him here and he said, ok... he came with another person, I think he was a writer I think... we took him around. Hulhule island was a nice place those days and Vihamanaafushi and many place and took photos. And he said he will bring a group and you be ready and he brought this group on 20th February 1972. And when they came here, they were very rich people you know and all from Milan. They had flown from Italy via Paris to Colombo I think. ..because there was a carrier called UTL operating. It goes to Colombo and Far East and New Caledonia. They stop here and chartered Air Ceylon Aero 40 passenger airline and they flew here. And we met them at airport and then put them up in two houses in Male'. They stayed here and every day we took them for fishing and visited uninhabited islands for picnic. This went on for a week and they were very thrilled with this. Because they have never seen a thing like this. And there were some journalist also in this group. They went and wrote in Italy magazines that there is a new paradise found and Mr. Corbin said you have to organise it better. So with him we built this Kurumba Village with 30 simple rooms. And he brought a real group in October that year and that's how it started. We knew nothing about tourism. It was tourists who helped us build the industry here. We listened to them and gave them what they wanted.

(Respondent 22)

Box 5-2 Unique government involvement from the inception

And meanwhile the government was watching us in our every step. So, they realise it was a lucrative business and they went to bed with this. President Nasir and his friends started a company called Crescent Tourist Agency (CTA) ... we were just pushed aside. But that is how it started. But the government was not so pro tourism at the public eye. [but] they were not an impediment... And meanwhile government also started building the airport. For whatever reason the airport was built and directly from Europe they came and there was no stopping to this. And it went on and on. But finance was very poor here. There was hardly anything here. Whatever we got we invested. There were very basic structures built. I mean there was no cement, just coral cuts and lime [taken from lagoons]. The type of things we built were in line with what the tourists wanted. We listen to them and built what we could do rather than do what we wanted. That's the beginning. And one of the biggest problems was getting food stuffs tourists want and transport and these things. It was a very big problem. President Nasir and Koli Ali Maniku owned the CTA. And these people were at that Government key positions, and they monopolized the sector. I mean we were just pushed aside. They were the main force. That company built the capacity here. Nobody could do this. Nobody could stop them and they also deprived us from going forward. I mean, this CTA company stop us from building ourselves and our tourist cannot go to an uninhabited island. These sorts of obstacles were put and contained us. When Maumoon took over Tourism got liberalised. During Nasir's time Islands can be bought, some islands were bought by some people and then Maumoon came into power they reversed it. Government took back all the land. Nationalised it. Then some adventurous people somehow or other started building resorts in small ways. It went on building. Those days capacity build up was big. Source of finance was not much from banks here.... Small amounts but some credit came from tour operators against the bed we build. It was an advance payment. They come and say, build 20 or 30 rooms for me, I will give you US\$ 50,000. Plus we were getting some credit from Singapore suppliers, as they were getting cheap bank financing and supply. This sort of a financing mechanism flourished here and it grew and grew. Government was not intervening into the growth of the sector. I think it was one reason why it grew. (*Respondent 22*)

As another main pioneer, Koli Ali Manik, recalls in his memoir, highlighting the influence of government and powerplay:

President Nasir instantly recognised the potential of tourism and wanted the government to enter into the business. He himself also became involved through a company he founded called Crescent Tourist Agency (CTA). A team including myself was selected and given a mandate to develop islands to provide a total of 600 beds for this venture. The islands of Bandos, Furanafushi, Farukolhufushi and Wellasaru were selected for development. (Manik, 2010, p. 172)

As international tourists began to arrive, and local businesses invested and grew to accommodate them, the local economy was fundamentally restructured. Those who had access to tourism had access to investors and to national and local political power. Moreover, these influences also had implications for every aspect of local community ranging from changes in prices of construction materials, local vegetables, fruits, fish, to labour.

Unlike the current tourism, tourist arrivals at this period were primarily a seasonal activity, where tourists from Europe (which was the primary market) visited to escape from winter. As local tourist resort owners were financing from their own savings and profits earned from current operations, the investment cash-flow burdens were huge. Meeting the seasonality of demand and the increased demand for quality services from tour operators in Europe, and tourists themselves, put enormous stress on the industry and investors involved. To this day, the resort owners have had to provide all the basic infrastructure, heavy investments including electricity, desalinated water supply and sewage systems, harbours, staff quarters etc. From the very early stages of tourism development, the enclave tourist resort, as a concept, had a strong bearing on the nature of tourism policies and planning. Each resort island stands by itself as an independent operation with all services that it provides to tourists, with the exception of the international airport service that the government provided. One of the key pioneers at the initial stage of the tourism industry in the Maldives recalls how the first air transfer of tourists and other supplies took place,

At that time, we grew very few vegetables ...mostly sufficient for local use with limited types. We had to import vegetables. With the tourists' groups in the flight we brought vegetables ... I came and spoke to Sri Lankan air force, because we need to have

regular flights. Before tourism started, we had two flights a year, to bring in teachers and takeout teachers in Maldives. So the airport was used for only two flights a year. ... Maximum four flights sometimes. Air Ceylon used to come here. But Air Ceylon was not willing to fly to Maldives on a regular basis. So I came here and spoke to the Sri Lankan air force chief. He had two or three old, second world war aircrafts. Four engine, small air craft 12 seats. So he repaired that. Put seats and made it very nice. And we started chartering that. That's how we started bringing in tourists. It used to take two and half hours to get to Male' from Colombo. (Respondent 22)

Further, he stated that other essentials were sourced from the British Air base in the extreme South Atoll of the Maldives.

We brought in people from different parts of Maldives. We had them employed there. It was very low salary at that time because nobody was earning a high salary. We as government officials were only earning about 150 Rufiyaa (around US\$30) as a salary. But things were cheap at that time so it was possible. Still the British had not left Gan (a British Airbase). So we brought a lot of stuff from Gan. Lot of diesel and petrol and other stuff we brought from Gan. There were boats supply between Addu and... that was very convenient for tourism. We brought post-cards and other stuffs from Addu such as Coca Cola too. (Respondent 22)

Although it was an industry that started with very basic accommodation and services to tourists, the tour operator's influence over the tourist arrivals led to these European agencies dictating or determining basic standards of a typical tourist resort. And further, regulations enacted by the government made investments costly year by year and difficult for new local entrants to compete with foreign investors, thus limiting it within a narrow band of elites who were established and blessed by the government in the tourism sector. These elites developed a special relationship with government officials and policy makers based on rent-seeking and corruption (Respondent 24). The cost of structural reliance on transportation requirements, food imports, restricted the initial growth of tourism to resorts around Male' International Airport (Kaafu Atoll). Kaafu Atoll, close to Male', with its own internal communication, transport, and basic financial and health infrastructures, became rapidly exhausted. Even with these services, a typical tourist would spend 2 hours by mechanised boats in addition to 15

hours of air-travel from Europe during 1970s. These boat rides today are reduced to 20 minutes by sea plane and are in themselves scenic experiences.

5.4.3 “Varuvaa” holders and tourism resort operators

Most islands that were leased during this period for tourist resort development and operations were primarily islands that were leased to a “varuvaa” holder. There was no open bidding until the late 1970s (Shakeela & Weaver, 2016), therefore the resort developer had to either make an arrangement with varuvaa-title holders or a joint venture with government. These varuvaa holders were often the elite from Male’ or from a particular atoll (Shakeela & Weaver, 2016). These islands were historically used for small-scale agricultural farming or simply collecting the palm and other naturally grown products that were sold to local communities and often brought to the local market in Male’ for selling (Respondent 20). In many cases the varuvaa-title holder assigns these islands to some caretaker from the island community close by in return for some share of what is collected or sold (Respondent 58). An Atoll Chief who served for 15 years, and also served as an island judge for a few years, highlighted the importance of understanding the notion of varuvaa titles. He noted that these titles have some form of power that is exercised by the elites who own them within the island community (Respondent 58). In some instances, such titles are given to an island mosque or education institution, for such community-established institutions to generate some form of revenue (Respondent 20). Hence, with the coming of tourism, such islands were permitted to transfer from an agricultural island to a tourist resort by DTFI or later the MOT. However, the varuvaa-title owner still continued to be the title owner of the island and typically an agreement was reached between the varuvaa holder and tourist resort operator for a monthly or annual income that was fixed and not based on the income earned by the resorts. Hence at this period and subsequent periods, disputes between the varuvaa holder and resort developer and operators arose over the “unfair” arrangement from the title holders’ point of view (Respondent 7) and the “heavy investment recovery and risk taking” point of view of the resort developer and operators (Respondent 24). Such commercial disputes were major issues during these periods. The judiciary system was alien to such cases, especially when a foreign investor or a local elite disputed cases, such cases pended for years, having negative impact on tourism. According to a senior tourism policy maker in earlier years, former Minister of Justice, and later a parliament speaker for several years, who also currently owns Resort Island, “most such disputes ended in favour of the tourist

resort investor or operator” (*Respondent 7*). His argument was that the agreements made between these two parties were clear and the government favoured the rising importance of tourism over the traditional elites, whose political allegiance was diminishing relative to rising tourism elites. While the president was the head of judiciary, executive and parliament, such cases were decided by the courts to show the impartiality and to maintain the fragile political stability during this period.

5.4.4 The modernisation of fisheries

While the tourism sector was growing rapidly, the fisheries sector, upon which local communities were largely dependent for livelihood, was modernised through mechanised boats. Mechanisation of fishing vessels started in President Nasir’s later years and continued to President Maumoon’s period, but access to markets was poor and government fiscal and political conditions did not allow them to make serious investments in the sector. As such the fisheries sector became the second main economic activity, although it was promoted as the “dhivehi qaumuge leynaaru” or the “bloodline of the Maldives,” while tourism was increasingly promoted in the later years of President Maumoon’s first term as the “*ranbis alhaa kukulu*” or the “goose that lays the golden egg” (Ellis, 1998, p. 103), a term I suspect was adapted by the government due to the growing influence of the private sector, also due to the delicate relationship that the sector had with the local communities during the period. These two slogans carried two messages that were in line with the broader discourses that were taking dominance in policy circles as evident from policy documents. First, island communities must continue with fishing activities and it is what our forefathers did for living and served those communities who perceived tourism as un-Islamic. Second, the tourism sector provides us with unimaginable wealth, and absolutely nothing must be done to harm it. Interviews with pioneers and elders of the local community confirmed the tensions that were present, between local community fishermen and tourist resort operators and owners, over the common resources from the beginning and is further discussed in Chapter 8. These slogans played a critical role in neutralising local communities and accepting the transformations that tourism brought into their community.

5.4.5 President Maumoon and highly regulated era

The coming to power in 1978 of President Maumoon and his Maldivian Azhar-graduate (Egypt) friends from an Arabic socialism ideology marked the beginning of a sustainable

period of tourism growth and development in the Maldives. Scholars and historians have argued that initially President Maumoon's regime adopted a highly interventionist approach to tourism development, "as a control mechanism to govern tourism in a socially and economically effective way" (Rasheed, 2015, p. 37). I argue this control mechanism, established in TDP during this period, was partly to negotiate with the emerging or rising Beykalun (the middle group, usually traders), who had the resources to challenge Maumoon's power that was vulnerable and at its infant stage. Beyfulhun (the highest rank in the stratification) still controlled some form of power in the capital Male' and some of the uninhabited islands that were transformed to resort islands were in the hands of a few Beyfulhun who could challenge Maumoon's position as the president, as different elite groups were ready to contest power. Any challenge, however, would rely on the Beykaluns who might deliver the support of local communities. President Maumoon understood this from the beginning and moved to undermine the strength of this middle social strata who were into the tourism business. He made one exception for the brother-in-law, and his family, of President Nasir. This family, who pioneered tourism with Koli Mohamed Umar Manik, eventually challenged the President and were jailed and banished for a long period until they were deemed no longer a threat. In essence, tourism was used as a tool for harnessing power.

President Maumoon encouraged a power base that could support his presidency against a possible or unsettling elite uprising. To this end, he saw the rise in tourism resort owners as a reliable power base that could be harnessed with a mutually beneficial relationship. Such a brokerage was enabled with the assistance of his brother-in-law Ilyas Ibrahim, who was married to the sister of the single most powerful business elite, Mr. Koli Ali Maniku, and also with his influence as a senior government official in the previous government. Koli Ali Maniku, being one of the pioneers of tourism, started tourism with the capital gained from his trading and shipping business. Local community-operated tourist guesthouses in inhabited islands were banned in the early years of President Maumoon, although why such a ban came all of a sudden against these local communities is only explained by official sources, stating that guesthouses in local community islands had "negative social impacts on culture and religion" (MOT, 2003, p. 23), and by key policy makers and tourism pioneers who argue that guesthouse operation harmed the "Maldives tourism product" or "sunny-side" image. In this way, power, politics and religion played an intertwined role in excluding local communities

from operating tourist guesthouses, which served the interest of tourism elites and President Maumoon.

These early experience of the interplay of elite and local power mediated by extended family networks spread across small island communities point to the importance of trust. Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, p. 519) argue that, “trust as an ingredient of sustainable and democratic development and effective collaboration among stakeholders.” As such the industry began with unbalanced power in the hands of few elites; it also failed to create trust in individuals who were leading and institutions that followed and also in local communities. Simply because the communities were not part of the TDP process from the beginning, the power relationships that were forged were extractive and non-accountable.

Towards the end of this period, it was evident that the government wanted to control and regulate the sector. The private sector, with its core elites serving the policy advisory role in an unofficial manner, lobbied to develop certain minimum standards and regulations against the new entrants who then had to incur additional entrance costs. The beginning of master planning was not a legal requirement and remains as such even today. It started primarily as an exercise to conduct a feasibility plan for expansion of the tourism industry out of Kaafu Atoll based on ideas of key pioneers and convergence of stakeholders of government, foreign consultants, and private sector within the tourism sector as discussed in section 5.5.1.

Henderson (2008) argues that in the Maldives, government involvement in tourism revolves around master planning. The master-planning process is sought as a process in which tourism planning is aligned with national plans and other planning processes that were taking place in the country.

It is striking to observe that almost all the master plan reviewing and formulation period coincided with the election year or year preceding elections as illustrated in Table 5-1. As such it provided government with the means to negotiate and collaborate with the private sector to wield power to enable the government to use it in their favour, such as promises of building a classroom for an island which later was officially termed as corporate social responsibility (CSR) or campaign funding in exchange for demands from individual tourist resort owners on matters such as lease payment extensions, and expansion of island land area by reclaiming as

regulations restrict the built-in area to only 20 % of the total island. In some cases, uninhabited islands were allocated by existing elites for control by local communities. Such rent-seeking practices were settled in an ad hoc manner in return for political favours. One of the key resort owners and later a policy maker also highlighted that tourist island resorts close by inhabited islands were more of a care taker of these communities. Sometimes they have to provide transport services between the islands and Male' and other hard infrastructure requests that come through the Island or Atoll Chief. If such requests are reasonably fulfilled, then a peaceful relationship exists between the community and tourist resort (Respondent 25).

Table 5-1

Tourism Master Planning and Presidential Elections

Period	Master plan period	Presidential Election/Major event
1983		President Maumoon's second term
1984–1992	First Tourist Master Plan	President Maumoon's third term (1988)
1993		President Maumoon's fourth term
1996–2005	Second Tourism Master Plan	
1998		President Maumoon's fifth term
2003		President Maumoon's six term
2007–2011	Third Tourism Master Plan	
2008		President Nasheed's elected
February 2012		Military and Police lead coups d'état
2013-2017	Fourth Tourism Master Plan	
2013		President Yameen elected

5.4.6 Getting on

On 3rd October 1972, the first tourist resort, called Kurumba Village on an uninhabited island, with 60 beds was developed by Mr. Mohamed Umar Manik, Mr. Ahmed Naseem and Italian George Corbin, followed by the second resort called Bandos Island Resort in December 1972, with 64 beds. By the end of this period (1972–1982) there were a total of 38 resorts in Kaafu Atoll and other tourist resort developments were undertaken in Vaavu Atoll and Alifu Atoll

which are atolls closest to Kaafu Atoll (Ministry of Tourism, 1983a). And by end of 1984, there was one resort in Baa Atoll, Lhaviyani Atoll and Alif Alif Atoll in addition to the other two atolls, showing the natural projection of increase in tourism in atolls surrounding Kaafu Atoll. Tourists arrived in the Maldives primarily from Europe, specifically Germany, Italy, UK and France. The tourist arrivals increased rapidly during this period from 1,000 in 1972 to 74,411 tourists in 1982. Such a rapid increase in the demand for tourist resorts quickly exhausted almost all uninhabited islands in Kaafu Atoll, except those islands that the government retained for military and state purposes. Islands that were too small for resort development and not under the care of government institutions were under the care of tourist resorts close by and local communities, with arrangements with these resorts, used these islands for entertainment purposes. At this stage, lagoons were not a contentious issue unlike the third and fourth master plan era. However, even in this period fisherman interviewed in the Kaafu Atoll recalled that they had to face tourist resort operators chasing them occasionally; but it was peaceful and not as hostile as it is currently. This fact was confirmed by tourist resort owners in their interview. A possible explanation is that fisherman had plenty of lagoons for bait fishing at that stage, and therefore access was not an issue. However, local communities in Kaafu Atoll, like Maafushi island and Huraa island, transformed their access to close-by uninhabited islands for different economic and social purposes, while they started operating guesthouses, and such changes brought in a fundamental change in the market and economic livelihood of these island communities. Increasingly more fishers transformed their fishing boats for tourist purposes and also started to operate guesthouses. This change was short lived and was to change in a few years in the next plan period, leaving these communities helpless and at the mercy of tourist resorts; this will be looked at in the next sub-section.

If one is to summarise, this phenomenal growth of the industry, from absolutely nothing to an industry that foreign investors in Europe started to take serious interest in during the next phase of planning, can be attributed to the careful hands-off policy of government, the influence of European tour agencies in crafting a tourism product that suited tourists from Europe, the sheer determination of tourist resort owners who wanted to succeed against the odds and of course the marginalisation of local communities in the process. The power relationships between these stakeholders produced different ingredients that were necessary to produce a successful tourism product. Finally, one must also acknowledge that the change in politics and change in

presidency from President Nasir to President Maumoon was a critical juncture that created the environment for such a product and outcome. But that change simply transferred the elitist control from Beyfulhun to Beykalun and failed to empower the local communities, but rather sustained the highly centralised and authoritarian regime of past governance for another 30 years.

One of the architects of the Tourism Act (2/99), who then later served in President Maumoon's regime as the Attorney General in drafting the constitutional reform agenda, highlighted that when the British finally left Gan Island in 1976, the local community who were employed at the royal base were instantly unemployed. If not for tourism thriving in the central region (Kaafu Atoll), these communities would have shifted to the fishing sector. Because of tourism, these communities sustained their income and a few built on the savings they collected to start trading in Male'; eventually some, a decade later, became tourism resort owners themselves by migrating to Male' region. I refer to these resort owners as "late-tourism elites" as they played a crucial role in the democratic movement since early 2000 in a more prominent manner, which is described in Chapter 6. This was a prominent period where outer island community individuals managed to penetrate into the tourism sector. It can be argued that this was not a government-designed policy intervention, but simply based on three circumstances that prevailed in that period. First, the British leaving the Gan base, left relatively skilled local labour who were trained and experienced in areas such as basic book keeping, bar tending, and other service-oriented skills required by the tourism sector. Second, the entrepreneurial and risk-taking mind set of these individuals who were familiar with trade and services, and who were similar to the Beykalun segment that initiated tourism in the Kaafu Atoll. Not every individual with these skills managed to penetrate into the sector, but only those who had sufficient savings or access to finance managed to invest. At the same time, they also had to broker with a varuvaa-title holder to enter into an agreement and then obtain government permission. Third, the investments that were required at that period were not substantial compared to a decade later, with standards that were established with new regulations in place. With all these factors, the hands-off approach of the government facilitated such entry. But in the subsequent period, barriers to the entry of tourism entrepreneurship for local communities increased and the absence of any policy to induce local island communities to enter into the industry led to consolidation of tourism resources at the hands of few elites.

5.5 Control, Regulation and Negotiation with Tourism Elites: First Tourism Master Plan (1984-1992)

Although the pre-planning period from 1972–1984, tourism fell into the two presidencies and political turmoil, the beginning of the FTMP was a relatively calm and stable political period. Tourism brought with it stable foreign exchange income that gave a huge boost to the economic growth and a period of power consolidation for President Maumoon’s regime for 3 decades.

Airey and Chong (2011) argue that government intervention in tourism is to address problems, concerns and opportunities; they argue that these are created in the domestic political environment, socio-economic environment, the tourism environment, national policy, ideology, policies from other sectors, and finally, the international environment. Following this I argue that the government of the Maldives in 1980 started to intervene in tourism mainly due to the interplay of these different complex political and economic factors .

The most significant document in the history of planning in tourism development in the Maldives is the two-volume study in which FTMP was detailed. It is also important from a cultural aspect; the second volume of the plan captures most of the historical and cultural aspects of the Maldives society from farming and boat building to handicrafts from different atoll communities and how such cultural aspects can be blended into tourism to develop a tourism product that will be beneficial to local communities (Ministry of Tourism, 1983b). It was a study conducted to guide tourism planning between 1984 and 1992. The Government of Maldives with the assistance of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, commissioned Danish planning consultants called Dangroup to prepare a feasibility study and a tourism master plan in November 1980. The scope of the project was twofold. The first objective was to assess the current state of tourism, including an assessment of the key tourist market, evaluation of existing assets and facilities for tourists in the country, assessment of institutions including laws and regulations that are linked to the tourism sector, and recommendations of future directions of the sector. Once the assessment was completed, a report was submitted by the consultant groups in June 1981.

The second objective was to produce a feasibility study of six projects that were selected based on the discussions with the private sector and consultant team by the DTFI within the President’s Office in January 1982. The six projects were: lay-out and disposition plan for a

tourist service centre, conceptual design of a standard tourist resort island that we see today, an exhibition centre of Maldivian handicrafts, protection of the environment and wildlife conservation, and, fruit and vegetable gardening for resort consumption. Much of the lay-out and disposition plans took time for implementation, while the Maldivian handicraft and exhibition centre never materialised. In order to do these feasibility studies, the team of consultants visited many of the atolls, conducted surveys and consulted different segments of island communities including farmers, local producers of handcraft and others.

In addition to the objectives laid out for the consultants, the government had four purposes to formulate the plan. First, to get a clear understanding of the tourism sector which was largely left on its own to develop and therefore to seek policy choices that were available at the time that could be of benefit to the government. Secondly, to ensure and manage tourism sector expansion that could be synchronised with other social and economic development plans. Thirdly, to construct a mechanism to work with the tourism-led private sector by introducing necessary regulations. Finally, to enable government to attract donor assistance for infrastructure such as transport that was expensive for the government or the private sector on its own at that period.

Based on these consultations, discussions and surveys, the team of consultants produced a detailed report consisting of two volumes. Volume 1 detailed overall planning features with planning criteria, the process of new tourism development zones and possible implications with future directions. The second volume detailed six projects as selected by DTFI using survey materials, community discussions, and basic concepts that would to be used for planning tourism.

5.5.1 The key plans

Three salient features of this plan stood out when the documents were analysed; first, the government was seen at the forefront of the discussion and decision making with the private sector “tagging along,” unlike the previous period of tourism. The absolute authority or power of government was the second feature, but inputs by local communities were seen as pertinent. This was interesting because six projects were developed to reflect the socio-economic and environmental context of communities –that the government felt they needed to win over in the next election in 1983. No other tourism master plan in the Maldives consulted the local

community more than the first master plan. It is here that a former policy maker who served the government at this period and was involved in this process shared his views on such “a surface level community consultation” (Respondent 7). He stated that these consultations with community were not a community consultation per se. According to him “community consultation” gave President Maumoon’s government two necessary things: first, a chance to build legitimacy to expand tourism by engaging with local community leaders like Atoll and Island Chiefs, whose support was important for the government at that period. Second, having a “foreign consultant” on the island gave an impression to the community that the government was planning for a community development project. Such impressions were often used as a political tactic during election periods which translated into votes, especially when these communities lacked absolute basic services such as health care, education, drinking water, sewerage systems etc (Respondent 58). Anything that the community leaders wanted was agreed to at that period, without questioning. All that was required by central government was to convince and persuade local community elites and thus the whole island community stood behind them (Respondent 58). However, such power relations that existed in the central and north regions of the Maldives were not present in the three southern atolls (Respondent 20). The final feature of the FTMP is its focus on environmental protection and sustainable development.

5.5.2 Failed implementation

Despite the external consultants’ advice to expand tourism based on the planning criteria, and scoring highest in 10 structured areas for evaluation, the southern atolls development never materialised (Ministry of Tourism, 1983a, p. 30). This could be due to three main reasons. First, the government was unsure of the political ramifications of such a development, given the attempt in the near past by these atoll communities to have a separate state established with the help of British during the early President Nasir era. The southern atolls had more traders who were exposed to other trading partners and who were more vocal about centralisation and the authoritarian rule of Male’. Their resistance movements in the past made them pay heavily despite these atoll communities, especially Gaafu Daalhu Atoll, having the single largest number of uninhabited islands and also islands that are larger compared to other islands with large lagoon areas. Second, the government lacked the institutional capacity to support such a development away from the centre. Third, the government’s fiscal situation did not allow such

large investments, and it had to depend on donors and the private sector that was perceived as losing control over the outer islands.

However, there are key tensions that were found that caused difficulties in implementing FTMP. First, the plan for rolling out a strategy to develop new tourism development zones was too technical and complicated, without understanding socio-political and economic realities that were at work in the system. Such complexity came from three main flaws in the planning process, one, inadequate consultation with the private sector. Second, too much commitment from government was taken for granted in the plan, while the government had little understanding of the sector and had weak institutional governance and financial capacity to implement the plan. Third, consultation with the community only took place at the surface level, which is only with the Atoll and Island Chief, who, given the authoritarian rule and repressive political environment, would have feared to express their views openly. Also, critical stakeholders such as fishermen were not part of the consultation from the beginning. Thus with these flaws, the plan simply never got implemented and as one former tourism minister stated, these plans, “simply gather dust in the ministry shelves” (Respondent 8).

The second tension that was evident is that the plan was drawn up by external consultants who saw the local communities as homogenous and failed to see the success of tourism eventually leading to marginalisation and disconnection from these communities. These strategies were drawn from the lens of a typical tourist and not from these diverse local communities. Thus the plan itself called for discouraging tourists from visiting local communities and guesthouse operations run by these communities in their inhabited islands. The “Robinson Crusoe” image promoted and sold to Western tourists was argued to be in conflict with local community tourist guesthouses. Such a ban on community-operated guesthouses came from two sources of influence, one from the tourist resort owners who feared local community-run tourism could trigger a conflict due to a cultural clash and cause damage to the tourism product that was being branded in Europe and, second, from the social and religious segments that believed tourism is harmful for the society, other than for its economic gains (Respondent 24).

Finally, the collaboration of the private sector and the government was unclear and the expansion of tourism to other zone/atolls while transportation and other infrastructure such as banking remained centralised and were extremely poor was unrealistic from the beginning.

Such poor infrastructure meant extra burdens and pressure on the private sector. Also, the dependence on European tour agencies to design a tourism that suited their profit margins was questionable. Unlike the President Nasir era, where his unique mix of public companies and his private involvement with key traders produced the necessary infrastructure such as the International Airport, and tourist resorts such as Bandos Island resort and Maldives Shipping, President Maumoon was unsure during the earlier years of his office how to forge a solid relationship with these traders. The revenues collected by the state including from tourism were barely sufficient to run the state bureaucracy and donor assistance was still needed for public projects such as basic education in the atolls, until late 2000.

Dredge and Jamal (2015, p. 287) argued that planning takes place as “a process of negotiation and compromise between public and private sector.” As a final comment for this period, the evidence of planning process that was extracted from the documents and interviews of the key policy makers, tourist resort owners and community leaders leads me to conclude that this was indeed a process of negotiation but this was exclusively between the central government and key elite tourist resort owners, who were senior policy advisors at the same time. Such discussions were not transparent. As such it produced a tourism that neglected the concerns of the local communities and only focused on the tourist resort. However, an outcome of tourism planning that emerged in this period was that Ari Atoll emerged as a new tourism zone with 14 islands from that region becoming operational. This outcome was not due to design but more due to Kaafu Atoll’s exhaustion of uninhabited islands; thus Ari Atoll was the natural extension in an evolutionary sense due to its proximity to the International Airport and capital Male’.

As the number of tourist arrivals increased, the lack of qualified human resources was felt by the industry (Respondent 22). This led to the government establishing, in 1987, a training institute for hospitality and tourism management with the assistance of European Economic Community (EEC) and UNDP. Effective mechanisms were not in place for local communities to send their young and displaced labour to train in this institution. Moreover, the dominant discourse that in the first place excluded local communities from effectively participating in tourism, had been in motion and thus parents were reluctant to send young people, especially girls, to train and eventually work in tourist resorts. The institute was based in Male’, which

was extremely costly for local communities to send their children to and with the absence of government policy to address this issue, locals in this period were not trained to take on these demanding jobs in the industry. This resulted in a huge demand for foreign workers from Europe for higher management jobs such as chefs, accountants, engineers and general managers, while mid- and lower level jobs were mostly occupied by Sri Lankans, Indians and workers from other South and South East Asian countries. This led to further leakages of tourism revenues out of the country.

Unable to reform institutions and constitutions to provide basic rights, despite the increase in the education level of average Maldivians, who were not able to take the opportunities in the tourism industry or take part in any trickle-down income of those who managed to get employed in tourism, meant there was a slow rise in oppositional political voices among the social elites who were marginally benefiting and the slow bulging middle class in Male’.

There was an atmosphere of fear brewing as the government sought to control every aspect of citizens’ lives. On 3rd November 1988, the capital Male’ was attacked by a group of Sri Lankan mercenaries with the help of a few Maldivians who were discontented with the regime. The coup attempt failed due to the intervention and assistance of the Indian Navy. This tragic event put the Maldives on the news of the major global news channels of that time such as CNN and BBC. It gave the Maldives a different sort of promotion and created an awareness on how fragile the Maldives was in terms of small island security. Leading on from these events, on 12th December 1988, the government established Ministry of Tourism, which marked the beginning of the tourism industry occupying the primary policy space in cabinet and the economy in an official manner.

These policy issues, which were somewhat external to tourism, shaped or influenced subsequent tourism policy so that it was increasingly dominated by the new social elites who owned tourism resorts. At this point it was clear that the influence of government decreased substantially by the second phase of tourism in the Maldives.

5.6 Summary of Findings

In line with more recent literature, scholars such as Saarinen et al. (2017, p. 307) have argued “distinct contextual and historical dimensions” are crucial in any unwrapping and a more

critical understanding of issues with regard to tourism development and planning in the contemporary period. Further, the network of power relations and pre-tourism issues of inequality and distributive injustice that reinforce marginalisation has to be considered (Manuel-Navarrete, 2016). This chapter contributes to such critical tourism planning and development policy studies by incorporating history, politics and contextual perspectives on tourism development in a SIDS context.

As I have shown, tourism development in the Maldives is tightly intertwined with national and local politics. In particular, the period that is analysed in this chapter is dominated by realignment of the network of local elites that were developing within, who were often involved in both government and the private sector. Although, in the initial stages of tourism development, islands out of Kaafu Atoll were not exposed to tourism development until the end of the *laissez-faire* period, the chapter demonstrates that right from the outset tourism development plans and processes seemed to marginalise these local islanders. Further, this chapter also highlighted the nature of planning as a broad framework for governance, without much thought given to management and implementation. This highlights the dynamics of power relations and an inability to practically implement a donor-driven exercise of planning, where an integral stakeholder is out of loop in the process.

With such a scene in place that captures every aspect of national and local policies, the chapter illustrates how the scene was set for a more technocratic era that followed with control, regulations and exclusive negotiations between tourism elites and government that are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Expansion of Tourism Amidst the Struggle for Democratic Reform

The ideological question no longer is whether or not government should be involved in tourism; the question becomes one of “who benefits from government policy affecting tourism?” The potential for political exploitation of tourism is very real. (Matthews & Richter, 1991, p. 124).

6.1 Introduction

“The deliberative processes allow multiple accountabilities of various stakeholder groups. The deliberative process aims to allow different voices to be heard and doubts to be expressed and entails: questioning assumptions and sharing information” (Arunachalam, Singh-Ladhar, & McLachlan, 2016, p. 420). Unfortunately, tourism-related policies and various legislations in the Maldives can be said to have not been deliberated in a transparent and inclusive manner from the inception of tourism, as discussed in Chapter 5. The context chapter and previous chapter further argue that such marginalisation of local communities goes back to pre-tourism times, which produced, within these entangled power relations and socio-economic conditions, a tourism industry that is largely controlled by neoliberal forces. The tourism local elites and multinational companies produced their own narrative of sustainable tourism development to sustain a tourism strategy based on a “one-island one resort” concept. It further highlighted that the initial period leading to democratic struggle was dominated by the realignment of the network of local elites, which went from strength to strength, who were often involved in both government and the private sector. Accusations of rent-seeking, island and lagoon grabbing and corruption, levelled at political officials, were common (Respondent 24). The period that led up to democratic struggle could also be described as a highly regulatory era that continued with control, regulations and exclusive negotiations between these tourism elites and government officials. This chapter looks at how this arrangement of interest worked in practice. It examines the interplay of structural conditions and many of the micro details and socio-technical arrangements in the political arena of Maldives tourism. In particular, the chapter highlights the details of network relations and the playing out of legislative reforms and changes in the planning process and the period of struggle for democratic reform that continues even today. This is a core feature of tourism and democracy.

Chapter 6: Expansion of tourism amidst the struggle for democratic reform

Tourism development and democratic changes in the Maldives are unique in many senses. Its intertwined thread goes beyond the tourism development and constantly evolves. I present two main arguments in this chapter. First, tourism elites' control over the economy extends to the political sphere, bringing about the call for democratic reform by a segment within the tourism elite, that then addresses their particular areas of concerns such as grabbing of lagoons, neglecting the marginalisation caused by tourism development. Further, accompanied by democratic reform, structural changes to governance and taxation resulted in the short democratic period which ended with a military- and police-led coup in February 2012. These events had tumultuous consequences during which, I argue, tourism actors took centre stage. Second, tourism-policy making and changes to its various legislations, as summarised in Table 6.1, were heavily guarded by elites and remained behind closed doors. This was despite rapid political and governance reform over a few years such as the introduction of multi-party elections, decentralisation provisions, and separation of powers. Hence, tourism elites have been a powerful driving force to change various legislations to benefit themselves exclusively, marginalising local communities in all stages of democratic change. Given this imbalance of power in the overall planning arena highlighted in the previous chapter, in order to seek how local communities can effectively participate in the tourism development process, this chapter aims to delineate various influences, power relations, and planning processes that go beyond a simple explanation of why these communities are excluded from the TDP. This chapter aims to demonstrate how and in what ways such changes occurred and suggest that if tourism is to benefit local communities in their everyday struggle for economic and environmental development, a more deliberate democratic governance is crucial.

Structurally this chapter consists of two thematic sections. In the first section I discuss how the intertwined threads of the politicians and tourist resort owners are producing changes in the governance of the Maldives. These powerful resort owners were seen as the king makers, who could bring down a 30-year-old dictatorial regime, and reform the country towards a democratic governance system that suited their policies and demonstrated the political stability that they needed to show to international tourist markets. They then, surprisingly, restored an authoritarian regime within a few years when the democratic changes led to tensions with the tourism development that they had envisioned. In the second thematic section of this chapter,

Chapter 6: Expansion of tourism amidst the struggle for democratic reform

I analyse and discuss key changes to tourism legislation during this period reflecting on the deliberative democratic principles of inclusion, equality and reasonableness (Young, 2002).

I do this with reference to key tourism document analysis, containing master plans, various legislation, and reports. I further analyse parliamentary meeting minutes pertaining to deliberations on tourism legislations and key informant interviews.

Table 6-1

Summary of Key Changes to Tourism Act Relevant to This Study

Law/Regulation/Policies	Year	Impact/Consequences	Consultation with whom
Tourism law (15/1979)	1979 Enforced on November 1, 1988.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All tourist activities and business have to be registered. These activities must be in accordance to regulations laid down by government. 2. Regular data to be sent to relevant department or ministry. 3. Introduction of bed tax of US\$6 per day per tourist. 	Informants revealed this law was formulated based on consultation with tourism pioneers and government officials only. Thus there was no inclusion, equality and reasonableness in the process.
Tourism law (2/99)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism Act (15/79) and Law on Leasing of Uninhabited Islands for Development of Tourist Resorts Act (3/94) was repealed. 2. The law clearly stipulated zones for tourism development and islands for tourist resorts and places for marinas shall be determined by the President only. 3. It further detailed how the bidding process for islands and structure of agreements was to be drawn between government and winner of a bid. 4. Determination of lease period: resort islands with less than US\$10 million will be leased for a maximum period of 25 years; those exceeding US\$10 million, government has the discretion to decide a maximum lease period of 35 years after 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary advisor of the Act was MATI board. 2. Other government Ministries and foreign experts were involved. 3. Thus there was no inclusion, equality and reasonableness in the process. Primary advisor of the Act was MATI board

Law/Regulation/Policies	Year	Impact/Consequences	Consultation with whom
		<p>considering the size of the investment and the proposed standards on the resort.</p> <p>5. Existing tourist resort owners automatically get additional 4 years of lease extension once the law comes into force. And additional provisions stipulated in the law if they convert their company/investment into a public limited company.</p> <p>6. Special provision was made within the law for public limited companies where at least 50% is sold to public and no more than 1% of public shares are held by a single shareholder.</p> <p>7. This law restricted environmentally damaging activities such as cutting of trees and dredging of the lagoon area without Ministry of Tourism (MOT) permission.</p> <p>8. It also clearly laid out registration processes of tourist resorts and other tourist business such as marinas, diving centres and tour agents.</p> <p>9. Bed tax of US\$6 per tourist per night was levied.</p> <p>10. A more detail provision of collection of information/ statistics was put in place.</p>	
1st Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	May 3, 2004.	Article 35, revised to increase bed tax from US\$6 to US\$8 per bed per night from tourists.	Negotiated with MATI board only.

Law/Regulation/Policies	Year	Impact/Consequences	Consultation with whom
	Enforced from November 1, 2004.	Mainly a fiscal policy measure in response to increase demand for infrastructure spending such as schools and harbours due to political tensions.	Thus there was no inclusion, equality and reasonableness in the process.
2nd Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previous resort land rent was determined through bidding process, i.e., mostly highest bidder wins. Mostly these do not reflect the different standards of resorts. Tourist resort land rent was harmonised. 2. Leasing period was to total 50 years with US\$100,000 per year that could be paid in each year itself. 3. Lease period could be extended to 99 years if a tourist resort company becomes a public limited company with a minimum of 55% shares sold to public. 4. Bed tax of US\$8 to be removed after 3 years from introduction of GST for tourists. 	<p>Negotiated with MATI board only.</p> <p>Thus there was no inclusion, equality and reasonableness in the process.</p> <p>Negotiated with MATI and resort owners who were MPs in the parliament.</p>
5th Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	2014	One-year extension of bed tax of US\$8 removal. Thereby bed tax to be removed from November 30, 2014.	MATI only
6th Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	December 2014. Enforced from	Introduction of green tax of US\$6 per day per tourist.	Government initiative, negotiated with MATI.

Law/Regulation/Policies	Year	Impact/Consequences	Consultation with whom
	November 1, 2015.		
7th Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	April 2015. Enforced from the same day.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An additional 49-year lease-period extension for tourist resort provided; resort is operational, all payments, fines and tax have been paid at the time of request for extension and pay total of US\$5,000,000 in advance. 2. Transfer of all tourism related environmental impact assessments and enforcement authority to MOT only. 3. All standards and services quality assessment to be determined by MOT only. 	<p>MATI only.</p> <p>MATI only</p>
8th Amendment to Tourism Act (2/99)	July 2016. Enforced from the same day.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised provisions on how an uninhabited island could be leased for tourism. This amendment allows unsolicited bids and MOT has the sole authority over the decision. But each year MOT has to finalise a list of islands that could be potentially open for bids or unsolicited bids after consulting with the president's office. This list could be change after seeking approval from the president's office. 2. Government can sell its shares to other shareholders of joint venture tourism companies formed by government and private parties. 	No consolidation with major stakeholders as per parliament floor minutes, the amendment was a "rush job."

6.2 Intertwined Threads of the Politics and Tourist Resort Owners in the Maldives

Henderson (2003, p. 114) argues that “tourism is also perceived to have some potency as a force for change by protagonists in political disputes but this is offset by the workings and interplay of much stronger political, economic and social phenomena and inequalities in the distribution of power and access to resources.” As discussed in Chapter 5, by the early 1990s, the tourism sector had become an unchallenged source of power that could dictate its own terms within the state due to the unmatched inward foreign exchange, government revenue and employment it generated, and the tight networks through which resort owners were often involved in both government and private sector. This section demonstrates how democratic changes were deeply intertwined with tourism, as MOT and MATI occupied the centre of influence in decision making domestically, both in tourism and every other aspect of the Maldives. Unlike many scholars, I argue that the tourism sector was responsible for bringing in democratic reform and also the sudden “coma” state in which the Maldives was until November 2018 presidential elections, with, during this period, all opposition leaders in jail or exile. The one-island-one-resort structure of tourism not only keeps the local community from participating in and benefiting from economic development, but also constructs such a disjuncture that it requires both political officials and tourism elites to maintain the disconnect between communities and governance.

6.2.1 Tourism sector as a catalyst for democratic change

At the outset I argue that tourism and its core elites play the most important role in shaping democratic changes and how the society is governed. There are several reasons why and how democratic reform was sparked off in September 2003. However, the movement built on more frustration than just that of a single event. Prior to this uprising, resistance movements were put to rest through often brutal forms of suppression and state institutional actions that were hidden from the international media. But with tourism growing and becoming the sector, by end of the 1990s, tourism also brought international media attention on the Maldives as a premium travel destination.

The September 2003 beginning of a resistance movement nationwide was a culmination of several contributing factors such as the increasing youth-age group within the population; increase in graduates returning to the Maldives with a broader perspective on freedom and

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basic rights; suppression of anybody who dissented with government positions openly or in secret; growing inequality between Male' and island communities; lack of basic infrastructural facilities in these communities and many more. However, among all of these, I argue the expansion of tourism was the most crucial factor that cut across several of these factors that materialised to bring a call and thirst for democratic change. With the expansion of tourism in the late 1980s, new actors entered into tourism as resort owners, as highlighted in Chapter 5 and referred to henceforth as "late-tourism elites." These were neither the pioneers, nor Beyfulhun (explained in Chapter 5), but were mostly from outer islands who were entrepreneurs in other economic sectors or who had worked under the pioneer resort owners but later started their own successful small and medium business with the tourism experience they had gained. According to a respondent who belongs to this group, "we were never consulted. Government always took advice from few individuals in the MATI. These people told the government how to run the industry. A lot of decisions that MATI took with MOT affected us directly" (Respondent 26). Further, the respondent commented that,

As a resort owner and a member of parliament, I have to spend on my constituent [which is also his own community] healthcare if a member of community falls sick, I have to regularly provide finances schools, and transportation of community members. Government then and even now doesn't care about the well-being of my people. At the same time, I have to run a profitable resort and paying lease rent and various taxes. It is quite impossible and difficult when I have invested constantly to meet the demands of tourists and meet the expectation of the community at the same time. (Respondent 26)

These new players felt their communities' concerns and basic rights and services were unfulfilled despite growing tourism earnings; the policy making was not transparent and inclusive, and decision making at MATI was also undemocratic. Thus, these new elites were not consulted in many of the tourism policy-making issues and were helpless to solve their communities' issues. Therefore, the resentments of these latecomers led to a democratic movement that was ultimately sparked when a prison inmate was tortured and killed by security guards on 19 September 2003, leading to a public outcry (Najeeb & Barrett, 2016). This brutal beating was followed by civil unrest, the arbitrary arrest of anybody who criticised the government and riots in the days and months that followed. Public outcry and growing political

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unrest led to calls for a formal democratic movement by several key critics of government and many of these late-tourism elites. Several of these critics and tourism elites were already elected MPs.

The growing resistance movement by these individuals and the public in general was suppressed using intimidation, and arbitrary arrests by the police. Given the atmosphere of fear, a number of key individuals within political and business sectors, including some of these late-tourism elites, declared the existence of the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) in Sri Lanka on November 10, 2003. An informant commented that, “funding for these resistance activities came from some resort owners and few people who secretly supported it, it was a difficult period” (Respondent 1). Several key founding members and current members of MDP and other political parties were tourist resort owners from this particular group. It is also important to note that extensive lobbying of Western power brokers by then in-exile Nasheed in the United Kingdom. Global influences on local policy agenda was evident, including that of funding of MDP to bring about democratisation process in the Maldives.

After almost 2 years of different resistance activities in the Maldives, primarily in Male’, with international pressure and President Maumoon’s own cabinet advice, on June 2, 2005, political parties were legally recognised. It must be noted that, during these 2 years of street protests, riots and resistance disrupted the tourist image from “paradise on earth” to island nation with “serious human-rights violations” and “suppression.” International media coverage of these events, opposition party members’ calls for targeted resorts boycotts, and constant travel advisories issued by European countries did minimum but calculated harm to the tourism industry to force President Maumoon to change his policies on governance. Thus some of the key pioneers were forced to accept the demands by the late-tourism elites and other opposition members, thereby paving the way for a more democratic-reform process. But unlike in Myanmar, where political tensions damaged the tourism image (Henderson, 2003), boycotting of tourism in the Maldives was carefully crafted by opposition members, who were resort owners themselves, in a manner that became a tool for negotiation between the authoritarian regime and opposition. The damages to tourism were also minimal as the tourist arrivals and receipts indicate. Thus, I would argue, this critical departure from a strict authoritarian form of

governance to allowing multiple political parties to legally operate in the Maldives was a product of negotiation between political elites and tourism interests.

There were several other causes for the call for democratic change. Some, mentioned earlier, like corruption and rent-seeking behaviour that was rampant within the state, were making it difficult for businesses to thrive. Another cause that fuelled the resistance movement was the call for freedom of expression, particularly from the educated age group. All these factors culminated in President Maumoon enacting a special parliament to redraft the constitution. The Speaker of this special parliament was Mr Gasim Ibrahim who was the leader of the Jumuhuree party (Republican party) and also served as both the Finance Minister and Governor of the Central Bank for President Maumoon. Mr Gasim was neither a pioneer nor a late-tourism elite, but owned more than five resorts across the country. Given the public sentiment, a good number of opposition movement members were elected, further solidifying the democratic movement. This parliament completed its mission of redrafting the constitution in August 2008 with several new freedoms and rights guaranteed under this new constitution. However, economic injustices and issues for tourism were not addressed in it (Respondent 11). Under the new constitution, in October 2008, a multi-party contested election was held; no single party gained 50% and as a result a second round of elections was called; President Nasheed, in coalition with other opposition political parties, won with a close majority. The coalition included the Jumuhuree party and the religious ideology-based Adhaalath party.

6.2.2 Tensions within first democratically elected government and a coup

There were three key tensions, from its inception, that this coalition-led government had to face that were directly related to the tourism sector: tourism sector workers' rights, the re-emergence of socio-religious tensions, and emergence of guesthouses. In addition to these three tensions, a legally contested arrest of a sitting criminal-court judge by President Nasheed using military forces led to a coup in February 2012. I argue that all these events and tensions culminated in opening an opportunity for the tourism elites to bring down the first democratically elected government, as many of the MATI core members were at the forefront of the coup. Hence many of the positive steps the Maldives took have reverted to an authoritarian form of governance, including the curbing of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

6.2.2.1 Tourism-sector workers' rights

The first tension was with democratic reform and associated broader reforms with regard to the economic sector basic rights promised by President Nasheed's party, MDP, during the elections, including a minimum wage and workers' right to protest and form unions. These were the main themes discussed during the resistance period and at key discussion at pro-reform forums before President Nasheed was appointed (Najeeb & Barrett, 2016). As a result, many rights that had been advocated were included in the Employment Act (2008). This Act had several financial implications for resort owners and was challenged even during its formulation process (Najeeb, 2014). According to a senior policy maker involved in the legislative process, both the Gayoom regime and then the opposition MDP, tactfully excluded tourist resort workers from the Employment Act in 2008 and subsequently the amendments do not give them equal rights as other sectors (Respondent 1). As a result of this exclusion, through the momentum of political reform, the Tourism Employees Association of Maldives (TEAM) was formed. With TEAM registered and increasing awareness of the Employment Act (2008), resort employees demanded their rights through petition and strikes (Respondent 19). According to the TEAM senior official, the starting point of tension between tourist resort owners and the government was due to a confrontation between resort employees and resort management. On December 28, 2008, for the first time, resort employees organised a strike on a tourist resort island, Reethi rah Tourist Resort. President Nasheed's first Home Minister, from one of his coalition partners, was also a resort owner who held significant share of tourism and was a key MATI member. He further commented that,

Mr Gasim as a home minister brought police to face the employees who were on strike without negotiating how their rights can be met. This led to a major confrontation between police and employees. It brought the resort operation to complete stand-still, with employees forced to move from staff area to occupy guest areas. This also led to protests in some local island communities and Male' in support of employees. Government fearing further protests and harm to tourists led to a triparty agreement between government, employees and resort management. (Respondent 19).

The matter was highly sensitive for both politics and tourism. Following this confrontation between tourism employees and police, the Home Minister resigned and his party officially withdrew their support for President Nasheed's government a few months later. An informant

who is both a resort owner and an MP revealed that there were deeper and more complex issues pertaining to the tourism sector including core MATI members and other local tourism elites. Continued demands from tourism elites were politically challenging for government to fulfil as the government had to garner public support to win parliament and local council elections in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Policies that were directly challenged by these elites included an agreement on harmonising tourist resort lease rent and the introduction of taxation and the minimum wage. According to a senior tourism-policy maker, tourist island resorts were previously leased for very small lease rents, many of the pioneers and early resort owners enjoyed these low lease rents. But since the late 1990s, new tourist elites who wanted to enter into the tourism sector, with the blessing of government, won resort islands with high lease rent bids, as bids with high lease rent got the highest scores. Therefore, with this harmonisation of lease rent bought in by the second amendment to the Tourism Act (2/1999) in 2010, the pioneers and early resort owners whose influence in MATI was greater were upset (Respondent 10).

Thus, the president's democratic government had to take major steps to address the core concerns of tourism employees, to redress structural issues such as lease rent inconsistencies in the tourism industry, resolve the growing budget deficit and address the demands for basic services such as universal health care, and other safety nets for Maldivians. As such, this created an unresolved tension between MATI and government.

6.2.2.2 Re-emergence of socio-religious tensions.

The other major tension was around religious issues, but directly linked to tourism as well. Another major coalition party, the Adhaalath party, broke its coalition due to growing tensions with President Nasheed's religious discourses and policies, and the fact that some of his associates wanted to implement a policy allowing alcohol to be sold on local community islands for tourists in hotels and guesthouses. These advocates argued that tourist guesthouse policy would only thrive and succeed with this change. Although tourist resorts sell alcohol, the buying and selling of alcohol was not allowed on local community islands. Under Islamic sharia law, the sale, purchase and consumption of alcohol is prohibited. Thus, with tourism since its inception, alcohol was only allowed on resort islands under special arrangements made by regulation. The trading and serving of alcohol under the regulations was allowed strictly for

foreigners only, although it was not strictly enforced. Some local enterprises and tourist resort owners sold it directly on their resort islands. Also, foreign diplomats, teachers and other workers consumed it on local islands after buying it from resorts or importing it directly. This change in policy by some strong advocates around President Nasheed brought about a gulf between Adhaalath party and MDP that did not recover, leading to the Adhaalath party and MDP coalition ultimately breaking up in 2010. This left MDP isolated in the government, with a minority in parliament in 2010. As such, a lot of legislative reform, from social to economic issues, was blocked by opposition.

6.2.2.3 Emergence of guesthouses.

While such realignments of political parties and interests were happening, an informant within MATI revealed that MATI was not only not in favour of allowing tourist guesthouses on local community islands but also strongly opposed other economic changes such as the proposed tax bills and allowing foreign investors to invest and manage Male' International Airport (Respondent 22).

While the brewing political situation was less and less in favour of President Nasheed, he had to sustain his campaign promises including “affordable housing” and “free healthcare for all” which required urgent additional revenue measures. With the world financial crisis of 2008 and slowing tourism sector growth, these measures were important to keep the political momentum from the presidential election in 2008, to the parliamentary election in 2009, to local council elections in 2010. Thus, these additional revenue measures included the introduction of a Business Profit Tax (BPT) and a GST. GST taken from the tourism sector started first and was higher than the GST for locals. In addition to these measures, President Nasheed strongly advocated the importance of introducing a minimum wage, especially to address the growing disparity between locals and foreigners working in tourism, and the introduction of income tax. Several infrastructure projects such as the upgrade and management of the international airport were awarded to international companies. Many resort owners including both core MATI group and late-tourism elites were not in favour of such policies.

One key informant gave an insight, “It is very common to see resort owners themselves or their proxies to compete for parliament seats” (Respondent 1) Further, he highlighted that resort

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owners would pledge to government to spend on infrastructure projects like building school classrooms or other community projects or provide employment opportunities for local communities, to secure their seat in the parliament and have direct control over the communities. Other times they donated to political party activities directly to demonstrate their support for the government which in return ensured tourism policies and institutions were exclusively under their control. Therefore, the roles that tourist resort owners played were much more complicated.

With these changes in taxation and various infrastructure projects to foreign companies, different resort owners, especially the MATI core group and others aligned to opposition parties, saw these changes in policies as a direct threat to their power and influence. Further, the short period given for the implementation of GST proved to be a financial burden on them, as often tourist beds were sold to European tour agencies months in advance and hence the added GST had to be absorbed from the resort owners' profit or added as a cost. A senior policy maker commented that every single government takes "MATI's advice very serious[ly]" and further it's always the MATI who "recommend or if not their endorsement of a Minister of Tourism is absolutely crucial, even during President Nasheed's government" (Respondent 11). The respondent further commented that the tourism minister is mostly MATI's representative in the cabinet. This is further demonstrated by appointment of MATI seniors as the economic advisors to the President from early 1980s.

But these issues, centred around tourism but linked to social, economic and political factors, ultimately led all opposition parties to agree on a common front that culminated in "December 23, 2011 mass rally." As a result of the political rally, political protests in Male' continued almost every day until a police- and military-led coup resulted in the resignation of President Nasheed. Vice President Dr. Waheed was appointed as president and served from February 2012 to November 2013. His vice president was a tourist resort owner and also the former atoll administration minister under President Maumoon. A number of basic rights including freedom of assembly and speech have been restricted since February 2012. The first round of the presidential elections was nullified by the judiciary with a petition from the Jumuhuree party leader (a resort owner and key MATI member). The second round was won by the half-

brother of President Maumoon. Several changes to the Tourism Act and new regulations came into effect during this period, favouring the tourism sector over local communities.

This section has demonstrated the strong link between tourism elites and political changes. More specifically, it has showed that late-tourism elites were central to democratic change, which primarily served their concerns. As such it produced inevitable tensions between the old tourism elites, politicians and the broader governance reform the country needed, thus culminating in a coup that could be said to have put the Maldives in a “coma” state in relation to reforming governance to build a modernised nation that synchronised with other global players. Since February 2012, a number of changes in tourism-related law and regulations have been expedited and approved. These changes, discussed in the next section, have severely restricted the economic development and social opportunities of local communities. The most critical of these changes, discussed in Chapter 8, denied access to their natural resources, exposing these communities to further risk from an environmental point of view.

6.3 Lack of Democratic Process in Tourism Legislation

Given the central role tourist resort owners play in the politics of the Maldives, as demonstrated in Section 6.2, a number of changes to tourism legislation have transpired specifically over the last 2 decades. This section analyses these changes to the Tourism Act and regulations and various amendments from three fundamental tenets of democracy: inclusion, equality and reasonableness.

Several scholars have agreed that for democratic society and political legitimacy of outcomes such changes to policy and legislations require inclusion and equality (Curato et al., 2017; O’Flynn, 2017; Young, 2002). As argued in Chapter 2, inclusion and equality are fundamental tenets of democracy (Young, 2002). Therefore, Young (2002) argues that those who are affected by decisions, who are expected to abide by these decisions, and whose everyday life choices are impacted, have to be included in the decision-making process. As such, the decision-making process would ensure decisions taken are more inclusive, considering tensions and viewpoints and allowing opinions to be shared across different stakeholders. Further, scholars argue that “democracy entails political equality, that all members of the polity are included equally in the decision-making process and have an equal opportunity to influence the outcome” (Young, 2002, p. 52). Although there are two more tenets required for a

deliberative democracy, as highlighted by Young (2002), namely, reasonableness and accountability, this chapter uses only inclusion, equality and reasonableness to assess the legislative changes that have taken place in tourism sector in the Maldives.

6.3.1 Lack of inclusion

Data analysis revealed that the MOT in the Maldives has no formal consultation policy. The Maldives legal impetus for tourism development is provided by the Tourism Act (2/99) and various other regulations made under this Act. The Tourism Act (15/1979) and (2/99) both demonstrate only the responsibilities of the president of the Maldives and MOT with no responsibilities at local atoll and island-community level. The Act itself does not have any provision for public consultation processes. Neither Tourism Act prescribes inclusiveness in tourism development and policy-planning processes to foster participation of island communities. Although the Act on Decentralisation of the Administrative Divisions of the Maldives (7/2010) specifically stipulates the objectives to be to: allow the island communities to make their own decisions in a democratic and accountable manner; improve people's living standards through social, economic and cultural development; empower the people; an increased scope to bring the services closer to the people; and create an environment conducive for peace and prosperity; such provisions have not been granted to local island communities for tourism laws and regulation formulations and implementation.

Inclusion with regard to tourism-development decisions in the Maldives is particularly important as diverse stakeholders, including local island communities, are affected and have interests to be protected if tourism is to be truly sustainable. However, it can be argued that the actual scope of inclusion depends on several factors: stakeholders affected by particular planning and policy decisions; the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the processes; the willingness to assume mutual responsibility to participate; the period during which the process took place; issues of common concern during that time period; and initiatives undertaken by community-based groups and local authorities to bring together the community of interests. (Arunachalam et al., 2016, p. 409).

Given the fragmented nature of island communities and the low population of most islands of the Maldives, unless there is a statutory backing connecting what has been stated in the Decentralisation of the Administrative Divisions of the Maldives (7/2010) and the Tourism

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Act (2/1999), it is difficult for local communities to be included in the processes of tourism-development policy making, unless such provisions are included in the Tourism Act (2/1999).

When we look at various other laws and regulations (excluding tourism) formulated and implemented during the democratisation period (2001–2012), we see extensive consultation at various stages and levels, including policy teams from different ministries travelling to islands to seek their view on these new laws and regulations (Respondent 11). Why changes in the tourism sector policies and legislations are excluded is explained, by a current member of parliament representing an island community, as:

first, these island communities lack the capacity and information to demand such participation in the tourism policy process; second, these communities need tourist resort owners or their management operating these resorts help on a day-to-day basis for simple matters such as travel from one island to another to more important matters such as financial support to provide basic services such as safe water and class rooms for school. Communities need a resort close by. How can they participate on an equal footing? A more important factor to my mind is, several senior members of political parties and members of parliament are resort owners themselves. They have not seen the merits allowing these communities to participate in the process and nor do I see them willing to do so. (Respondent 11)

For example, among the eight amendments to the Tourism Act (2/1999) to date (see Table 6.1), the 8th Amendment, as described by one of the opposition MPs, took place in a rush and within few days of government sending out the amendment. The economic committee of the parliament chaired by government MPs decided without consulting any stakeholders including other MATI, other government ministries or other tourism related NGO's. Moreover, the amendment was accepted as sent by MOT (Minutes of Parliament No: 35-18-16, 2016). This change revised provisions for how an uninhabited island could be leased for tourism. Further, the amendment allowed unsolicited bids and gave the MOT the sole authority over such decisions, provided it finalised a list of islands each year that could be potentially open for bids or unsolicited bids after consulting with the President's office. This list could be changed throughout the year with approval from the President's office. Many opposition MPs criticised

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this change as it could increase rent-seeking and corrupt practices. But the amendment was enacted by the President on July 10, 2016.

A similar process was involved in the formulation of the Lagoon Boundary Regulation surrounding islands leased for tourist resorts, tourist hotels, tourist guesthouses and yacht marinas (2012/R-7). Although it was deliberated in parliament in 2011 and 2012, when President Nasheed's government was in office, the MOT, government and parliament failed to include local communities in this decision. The outcome was years of conflict between tourist resorts and fishermen as discussed in Chapter 8, during which fishermen were marginalised. A key government informant noted that while this regulation was formulated, other sectoral ministries such Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were not consulted, neither were local institutions and community members consulted (Respondent 3). The decision was purely based on non-formal discussions between the MOT and MATI. Further, there were two more amendments to this regulation brought in March 5, 2014 (2014/R-18) and November 1, 2016 (2016/R-94). These amendments to boundary regulations allow the MOT to lease further areas of the lagoon up to 2000 metres surrounding each tourist resort to develop tourist resort facilities that were not a part of tourist lease agreement or area defined by the boundary regulation (2012/R-7) in 2012. Prior to this regulation, according to several tourist resort owners, the extend of lagoon area surrounding each tourist resort was not clear, thus there was room for tensions between local community fishermen and tourist resorts (Respondents 22, 23, 24 and 25). According to them it must be clear now, but the conflicts continue. The nature of these conflicts is discussed in Chapter 8. In understanding why such conflicts arise, one senior government official highlighted two main factors; first, the current exclusive decision-making process is not inclusive of key stakeholders including other sector ministries and local island communities. Second, the regulation allows tourist resorts to expand their lagoon area independent of the existing tourist resort operation or extend their current resort operation without considering the local island community's needs, concerns and viewpoints.

The data illustrates that there was lack of inclusion in the formulation of the Tourism Act and various other regulations, which contributed to further marginalisation of local communities.

6.3.2 Lack of equality

Tourism-development policy-making processes and legislative changes do not appear to have provided equality among different stakeholders, particularly the local island communities. Data analysis indicates the three atoll communities in this study did not enjoy equal rights to express their view points, or to critically question tourism development activities that were taking place around their own island or within their atoll. This further indicates that the broader social, economic and political environment was not conducive to accepting critiques and critical reflections on changes to tourism policies, nor was it fully acceptable to question the authority of the government, since most of the democratisation efforts took place in Male' and a few other atolls and islands with larger populations like Addu Atoll islands and Gaafu Dhaalu Thinadhoo. Further, as argued in Section 6.2, these efforts were largely funded and led by new tourist resort elites. Hence, smaller island communities felt dominated. It was also found that from time to time conflicts and tensions between local communities and tourist resort mounted when fishermen entered into the set boundary of tourist resort and waste management practices were flouted as evident in Baa Atoll and Kaafu Atoll. Such tensions and conflicts were resolved using both coercion and manipulation of power within the local communities. These communities felt threatened by government authorities and tourist resort actions that followed. These communities remain silent on such matters as they have no forum to discuss these concerns. Democratic-reform forums have not provided them with equality, which, as Young (2002) argues, is an important tenet of democracy.

Three informants from the three atoll communities highlighted the lack of equality with regard to three issues with changes to tourism legislation that they identified as important to their everyday life.

A former Atoll Chief from Baa Atoll (Respondent 58) noted that almost all islands used to have informal community dialogues at the beachfront. The place where these dialogues took place is called "*Holuashi*," similar to what Karpowitz et al. (2009) advocates for enclave deliberations. People from different age groups and different professions came together in the early morning or in the evening after work or during weekend when fishermen are home. According to Respondent 58, until the start of democratic changes people feared talking about politics, or questioning government policies; they may have discussed such matters discretely,

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but they were not discussed openly at these community forums. But with democratic changes and private television channels and newspapers, people from different parties now openly discuss political matters, although they rarely question tensions that they face with close-by tourism. In understanding why such discussions do not take place, he highlighted that his community depends on “help and assistance” and the “kindness” of these tourist resorts owners. They fear if they talk critically about these issues there may be threats or retaliations. I argue that a precondition for deliberation on tourism policy issues is ensuring the broader political environment promote deliberations and dissent without fear and is less dependent on tourist resort owners as well as government providing basic services such as safe water.

Speaking of such threats and retaliations, both officials interviewed from Kaafu Maafushi island highlighted that they constantly face waste thrown or dumped at sea close to their island being washed onto Maafushi beach (Respondents 39 and 40). As such, cleaning their beach areas has been challenging. In the past when such matters were discussed, tourist resort islands responded by limiting or not sending tourists island hopping or making it difficult for the island community to obtain jobs in these resorts. Such threats undermined equality as a basic tenet of democracy even during the democratic-reform period. Similar findings were seen in Baa Atoll. Further, one island council official highlighted that when such matters were brought to the attention of the Ministry of Environment and Energy and other government agencies, no action was taken to rectify the issue (Respondent 51). Since many of these islands have recently started to operate guesthouses serving tourists themselves, they find clean beaches a critical element of their guesthouse businesses. According to a guesthouse operator in Baa Atoll, they have tried several times to meet with MOT officials on these matters and have not been successful (Respondent 54).

A surprising finding of the study was that other than fishermen and a few atoll/island councillors, most island community members have no knowledge of a boundary regulation or the two amendments brought about over the last few years. These community members also have no detailed knowledge of specific boundaries surrounding the close-by tourist resort islands. This important point was highlighted by the General Secretary of TEAM who claimed that the attitude of both the MOT and government in general towards the lack of provision of information on laws and regulations to citizens needs to change. He noted that there were no

surveys or forums, or other opportunities to express island community concerns, including the locals who work on these tourist islands. As such, several rights of workers, especially for women, are neglected and marginalised in this process. He further highlighted that before such policies and legislations are drawn up, communities need to be informed and consulted (Respondent 19). Therefore, for inclusive and equal participation for local communities in tourism development to occur, it is critical that information on tourism laws and regulations, and their amendments, is provided to the community. This would allow local communities to participate on equal terms.

Equality is important in identifying local community concerns with regard to tourism, conflicts of interest, and the priorities of each stakeholder, to come to an amicable understanding that could work for the better of all. The finding suggests that there is inequality with regard to participation, representation and freedom of expression. Community participation, for instance dialogues to understand the existing practices of the island communities, forums and surveys are important to address this inequality.

6.3.3 Lack of reasonableness

Young (2002) considers reasonableness as “a set of dispositions that discussion participants have” (p. 24). She highlights that these sets of dispositions include “willingness to listen to others who want to explain to them why their ideas are incorrect or inappropriate” (p. 24). Further, it is about, “solving collective problems,” acknowledging “dissent often produces insights and that decisions and agreements should in principle be open to new challenge” and more importantly treating others in the process with respect (Young, 2002, pp. 24-25). Such a position allows conflicts and tensions to be solved in a more peaceful manner. To date very little attention has been paid to the role of the intertwined layers of history, politics, culture social and religious issues in the Maldives.

As discussed in Chapter 5, social and religious factors were important in determining the one-island-one-resort concept of tourism in the Maldives. With limited freedom of speech and assembly until early 2000 and the current restricted nature of these rights, I argue most island communities only view tourism as an economic vehicle for development. They have failed to understand/recognise the way and manner in which the sector has affected the social, political and environmental aspects of their lives. Such discourse is rarely discussed and restricted

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mainly to social media. Whether it is a small and remote island community in Baa Atoll or Gaafu Alif Atoll or a former policy maker or technocrat like myself, who was born in and worked throughout my life in Male', we have failed to see how interconnected tourism is with every other aspect of our lives. As discussed in Chapter 4 (methodology), my interactions with tourist resort owners, island communities and policy makers have brought me to the realisation that there is, in fact, fundamentally no "reasonableness" in tourism development policy or the legislative process. I also argue that with the guesthouses being allowed to operate on local community islands and the increase in the number of guesthouses in operation, there has been a sense of urgency and willingness from local communities to engage with tourist resorts other than for their dependence on them for basic needs and help and assistance.

Both island communities and tourist resorts have co-existed side by side for more than 4 decades, but both have been stuck in their past experiences. Arunachalam et al. (2016) argue that "reasonableness requires revisiting societal expectations of the past" (p. 416). The increase in educated youth, and numbers of local community members working in tourist resorts, and the change in guesthouse policy during the democratic-reform period have all brought these local communities to change their position marginally compared to their previous societal expectations based on religion and cultural elements. I argue they have become more open to discussion. But as argued in previous sections, these communities lack inclusion and equality in the process. While such a shift has occurred at the local community level, the willingness to listen to these communities, solve collective problems, acknowledge such discussions will bring insights and also mutual respect, have not been seen in MOT's legislative and tourism development policy processes.

Reasonableness entails listening to collective problems such as waste management issues and boundary tensions that have been on-going for decades. But these have not been acknowledged in tourism master plans until recently, nor in any of the new regulation-formulation processes or in any of the discussions at tourism-development processes. With the guesthouse association taking a more proactive role using their annual guesthouse operators' meetings at national level in the last 2 years, government has been seen to exhibit some willingness to engage.

6.4 Summary

To answer the question, “how and in what way has the democratic processes worked in the contemporary period of tourism planning and policy formulation?” first we must look at the democratic process that was intertwined with tourism development. Unlike other scholarly work on tourism, that treats tourism as a sector independent of political change, this thesis proposes that there is a strong interplay between democratic or authoritative regimes and tourism development. The tensions discussed in Section 6.2.2 highlight the importance of acknowledging the significance of the tourism sector in crafting a democratic society in the Maldives. Second, it is clear from the exposition of the changes in tourism legislation over the past democratic and authoritarian period to see that the tourism sector has gained much in the form of tourist resort island lease-period extensions of up to 99 years and strict boundaries around contested lagoon areas surrounding tourist resorts. When such gains were made by the tourism sector, local communities lost their access to uninhabited islands and lagoons that have been increasingly taken without any consideration to their current use and needs. These gains were made because of the lack of democratic process within tourism development policy making; particularly lack of inclusion, lack of equality and lack of reasonableness in the broader decision-making process of tourism development. These processes provided a clear illustration of the tourism elites’ control within political and economic sphere of the Maldives. Further, they show that there is no clear provision for community participation in tourism development planning and legislation. If there is any at all, it disappears at the implementation stages, retracting the Maldives into an authoritarian regime that could guard all its provisions. Thus it is vital for us to see tourism as not just *a* sector but *the* sector.

At its heart, any deliberative democratic change must instil inclusion, equality, and reasonableness as key tenets of democratic change, irrespective of which sector of legislative or policy change it is (Young, 2002). I have shown the ways in which tourism-development policies influence various other sectors, institutions, legislation and social norms in the Maldives. Maldives politics have evolved from elite-based family based dynastic (monarch) rule to a regime of power dominated by tourist resort elites to construct the facade of democracy. In some cases, tourist resort owners themselves form political parties or fund political parties to further their interest. This suggests that simply having multi-party elections every 5 years is not sufficient. But policy decisions, new legislations and various amendments

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to tourism must be deliberated openly and must be inclusive of all different stakeholders at national and island level if the Maldives is ready to embrace a democratic society which is inclusive and willing to share its natural resources, wealth and the economic growth tourism brings to island communities.

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Chapter 7 Forms of Community Participation in Tourism Planning

7.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I analysed the tourism development planning and policy processes that have emerged over the last 45 years and the various influences embroiled in tourism policies which in most cases dominated the national development policies. It has also been established that the current form of tourism development planning and policy formulation is controlled by network of global capital and local tourism elites exclusively for their benefit. Despite the call from various policy documents for the need to include diverse stakeholders in tourism development planning and policy formulation, such a policy space was reluctantly opened up only to stakeholders within the tourism industry less than a decade ago. Local communities remain still largely disconnected and excluded from the process. Policy makers have some flexibility within these processes to influence the planning and policies, but such opportunities exist within periods of political instability and in a democratic environment as discussed in previous chapters, where political pressures of the local communities can weigh against the above-mentioned dominant forces. In this chapter, I use the concept of participation to argue that local communities have no role in decisions made in tourism development and therefore are provided a narrow opportunity to benefit from tourism development such as selling their local products and services or fair treatment in employment.

This chapter explains and examines participation, various other community involvements directly or indirectly in relation to the tourism development process by critically evaluating the limitations of participation in the three case study sites. As such it reveals the underlying complex social and political processes that established and shaped tourism development as it evolved into the current state. At the outset it is important to acknowledge that these communities are not homogenous, and from the field experiences and the data collected it was clear that island communities are heterogeneous and different stakeholders at various community level have different agendas for development. It will also become important to highlight the complexity of power relations (that is investigated in Chapter 6) that was apparent in all island communities from households to the highest state level.

The study is divided into three case study locations, each of which has experienced tourism development and its impact differently and at different times. This difference, however, is less significant than I anticipated and all three islands experienced very little community participation in tourism. While the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve project on Baa Atoll since 2011 gave some limited opportunity for local community to participate in a tourism-sector-related activity, this did not extend to wider tourism policies and, in practice, participation was largely more symbolic than concrete. Existing social and political structures have not opened up for the different segments within these communities such as fishermen and womenfolk. In practice, only the local Atoll Council represents communities and then only as a whole. Gaafu Alif Atoll was exposed to tourism development more recently during a relatively democratic period with greater freedom of expression, and still enjoys no more participation than Kaafu Atoll, which has a much longer experience of tourism development. In short, the data reveals that all three atoll communities have been excluded from participating in tourism development in all stages of its development, and largely excluded from its economic benefits.

7.2 Framing Local Participation in Maldives Tourism

Scholars have argued that lack of opportunity for communities to be involved in the tourism development process has led them to be “disenfranchised from their traditional lands as a result of tourism development” (Mostafanezhad, Norum, Shelton, & Thompson-Carr, 2016, p. 15). National planners, Atoll and Island Councils and local communities at all levels however continue to express a strong desire to be part of tourism planning and its implementation (Fieldnotes 1, 3, 4, 5). This is consistent with the call from several recent scholars for local community participation in tourism development and environmental initiatives (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015; Mosedale, 2015; Scheyvens, 2011; Thompson-Carr, 2016). As Chapter 5 and 6 confirm, the actual space for participation of local island communities to participate in tourism planning processes is tightly defined, and framed in “top-down” rather than “bottom-up” policy process. One of the senior MOT official’s rationales for having more consultation by stating:

Public participation or having a public say in our policy making, is not as strengthened as it should be. I know that the First Tourism Master Plan external consultants did consult Atoll and Island Chiefs, but should we open the master plan drafts for public comment, like other countries do? I think that’s what we should be doing. Because the

days have changed and if they, ... if we do a plan today and say we implement this, if there's a public outcry we change it, why should we.....why should we lead to that, I think we should involve them from the very beginning. (Respondent 2)

7.2.1 Gaps between planning and practice

Evidence suggests that in the course of last 45 years, the selection of uninhabited islands for tourism development has little to do with the Master Plans, but is an outcome of tourism investors' interest and political circumstance (Respondent 2). Often the islands and lagoons that are selected have important community benefits attached to them and they are not considered in the decision.

Under both 1979 and revised 1999 tourism law, the decision to allocate an island or lagoon or a zone for tourism development was solely at the discretion of the President and there are no laws or regulations that compel the government to consult the community before such a decision is made. However, the environmental assessment processes discussed below (Section 7.2.2) have some components of local community consultations, although the decision to allocate the island is already made prior to this consultation. How inhabited islands were allocated for tourism purposes in different planning periods is discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. The more recent amendments to the Tourism Act 1999, such as the 7th (in April 2015) and 8th (in June 2016) further solidified this stance and also gave the private sector a requirement to submit a tourism project on an uninhabited island that it sees as commercially feasible without a public bidding process. The 8th Amendment states that unsolicited tourism proposals that are submitted to the MOT are simply evaluated based on the investor's financial strength and environmental impacts which the MOT conducts as per an earlier Amendment (7th) brought to Tourism Act. The MOT then proceeds to obtain the permission from the President before granting the uninhabited island for tourism development after the investor pays an acquisition fee for the island.

There are two important points to be highlighted in this process, first the lack any community consultation or assessment of how local communities will be impacted by such a project. This undermines the ability of local communities to participate in the broad perspectives of participation highlighted by Timothy (1999). Second, the 7th Amendment brought to article 15 of Tourism Act in 2015, removes the powers of Environment Protection Agency (EPA)

under the Ministry of Environment and Energy to conduct independent environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for tourism development activities and mandated these powers only to MOT under the influence of tourism sector elites (Respondent 14). Such a change puts local communities further into environmental risk in addition to the exclusion of their rights to access their natural resources.

Data analysed revealed that there was at no point an effort to include local communities in the decision making of tourism island selection and various policies pertaining to the tourism sector. Further data from the fieldwork and policy document analysis revealed that there are no avenues for communities to express their opinions and concerns highlighted in the policy processes in chapter 6. Surprisingly, both the Tourism Act 1979 and current Tourism Act (1999) with eight amendments until 2016 and all other regulations pertaining to the tourism sector do not mention the words “local island communities” or “community participation,” “community consultation” or any other related words. Both respondents from the Tourism Ministry (Respondent 2 and Respondent 3) mentioned that at times informal consultations were conducted, after an island was allocated for tourism, but they admitted it was not a standard operating procedure that they followed every time an island was allocated. Primarily, consultation was to assess the livelihood implications of such a decision at the early stages of tourism development (FTMP and Second Tourism Master Plan). Interviewees (Respondent 5, Respondent 14 and Respondent 15) from stakeholder ministries and other agencies highlighted the lack of transparency and openness in the TDP, especially at the island and lagoon allocation stage.

7.2.2 EIA: A small window for local communities to participate

From the data analysis it was found that the only point of local community input or consultation into a tourism development project was taken into consideration was the EIA since it came into existence within the democratic-reform period in 2007 under the EIA regulation (2007) and later in the EIA regulation (2012). It has to be noted that this is only an environmental assessment process and not a forum for local communities to participate on tourism policies in a strict manner. At the same time, when such an assessment is undertaken, decisions regarding the allocation of the uninhabited island or lagoon allocation or reclamation project are already made and thus the EIA assessment is only to identify possible consequences of development

projects on the natural environment and local communities and possible mitigation measures the assessment suggest, while the actual allocation decision goes uncontested (Respondent 14). Scholars argue that “throughout the EIA process there is no public consultation and participation” (Zubair et al., 2011, p. 231). Further, Niyaz and Storey (2011, p. 69) concur with the lack of public participation and point out that these assessments in the Maldives “take place within a framework of limited democratic representation and participation.” While, Zuhair and Kurian (2016, p. 129) also support this argument and highlighted further that some socio-economic barriers such as “political influence, lack of human and financial capacity, gender gap, loss of community spirit and lack of environmental and procedural awareness” affect both the capacity and willingness of local communities to participate in these assessments of economic projects such as tourism development. As such the location of the resort island and its surrounding lagoon areas, and in some cases close-by satellite island (smaller in comparison), are all pre-decided centrally by the government and resort development projects. The constant changes to these islands and adjacent lagoons are undertaken in the absence of community participation. Often decisions are made in collaboration with tourism sector elites (either MATI or individual elite who is interested in an island for tourism project). Such decisions are made long before the local island communities are approached during the EIA stage (Respondent 14). Local islanders had a small window of opportunity to provide information and express their opinion on some environmental aspect of the tourism resort project such as beach replenishment or building jetties and dredging (Respondent 14). At these consultation meetings, the communities are generally presented with the specific environmental issues of the broader resort development project and asked to comments. Their inputs are therefore more reactive than active and all the spatial planning decisions are already made by the government authorities in collaboration with the private sector (Respondent 14). One of the government officials argued that such an approach was necessary:

In my opinion two factors were at play here, one, we lacked critical infrastructure required for tourism and other sectors at the beginning, therefore our dependence on tourism sector was to attract investment into these infrastructure. Second, island communities lacked proper knowledge on tourism sector operates, they still don't understand it. (Respondent 3)

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The 8th Amendment of Tourism Act 1999 in June 2016 has further narrowed the way in which the local community provides their input into tourism related EIA's in addition to the above discussed shortcoming in the process. The MOT is currently acting as the one-stop shop for all tourism-related policy making and as the regulatory body. This curtailing of EPA's regulatory power by the MOT was severely questioned by environmental NGOs and government bureaucrats (Darby, 2017). When asked why such a change was brought, one of the government policy makers who did not favour such a change in policy commented that it was due to "too lengthy process for tourist resort owner... They wanted to make it faster and more flexible approach for the industry" (Respondent 14). Further, the same official highlighted how tourism elites flex their power in changing the regulation in their favour by putting both the local communities and environment at risk.

Basically some of the resorts, especially in the Baa Atoll area...they were doing certain things not mentioned in the EIA, for example like mitigation measures or the measures that they have to take in the construction phase. So EPA was a little bit strict about these things, so they were questioning the resort developers and the construction companies as well. At one point they thought EPA's red tape was affecting them in two ways. One, island in which the construction is done, work got delayed and other is their reputation. Definitely their reputation is at stake, because if these resorts are then considered environmentally not safe and not taking sound environment measures, then some of their clients might be hesitant to partner or send tourist. Such reputation impacts their business. So they always ensure they are on the good books of the environment and regulations, by marketing themselves as protecting and preserving the environment...they always sell the environment as the main product. So what happen was that, they pressured the minister to change the EPA Deputy Director General to a different position and then he was put aside and at the same time tourism related EIA regulation or regulatory mechanism has been transferred to the MOT. So basically, MOT is a ministry that facilitates the industry to do everything, whether it is planning or regulating. Their main mandate is to facilitate the tourism development. But the Environment Ministry's mandate is a little bit different; our priority is not the developers, but the environment protection and preservation. So when the EIA regulation has been transferred to the MOT, they will be definitely trying to facilitate

the mechanism to ensure that the developer is getting all the benefit rather than the environment and required protection and preservation. (Respondent 14)

I argue that although the tourism industry brought a lot of good environmental practices in protecting the islands and lagoons as laid in the Environment Act 1993, the current trajectory of neoliberal forces and tourism elites' unchallenged power within tourism policy making, and also within the central government, puts not just local communities at risk but also the environment that the sector itself values highly. The official highlights some of these risks:

Because we can see even now the huge reclamations undergoing in some tourist resorts without any bund walls and sedimentation is being going into other reef areas. If EPA was regulating the process, they would raise questions and they would monitor and as the developer have to take the mitigation measures. For this reason the Tourism industry wanted the EIA regulation to be taken by the MOT instead of Environment Ministry. I think we need a balance, one thing is we try to develop all lagoons for commercial purposes it may not be sustainable. These days all resorts have the concept of Water Bungalows and Beach Bungalows...they try to move all the development into the lagoon and reef area. Even now the regulations say they can and it's their property. Usually they don't allow fishermen or local people to get closer to that area. Whether they built it or not it will be excluded for the community the Tourism Act and regulations gives that the property rights for that area. But I think environmentally if such structures are built without proper assessments and mitigation measures for safety, protection and preservation of environment, we can face lots of issues, in some resorts they have started facing issues like some Bungalows have to be shifted to other areas because the assessment was not properly done. So they found that the dynamic nature of the sediments movement around the island has caused the Bungalows to be destroyed... I think in Laamu Atoll Six senses... an resort had to shift its water Bungalows due to this. In my view we have to give a kind of balance to this issue...we should not entirely allow the whole reef to be given to resorts....because during construction they will destroy some parts of the reefs. .although corals may recover after few years like 10 or 15 years the marine environment may be sustained but the local islanders would have lost more. (Respondent 14)

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Although the FTMP claims the need for “integrating the future development within the local socio-economic system and a high degree of local participation is aimed” (MOT, 1983a, p. 13), the subsequent three master plans to this date have failed to engage with local communities in a meaningful and inclusive manner. They failed to participate with different segments of the local community. Instead the planning process used MATI as the primary voice with foreign experts’ or consultants as advisors and draftsmen to formulate the master plans and has failed to listen to the local communities. As such the empowerment of local communities in tourism development remains unachieved. The Current Fourth Tourism Master Plan vaguely talks about planning at atoll and island level, but the discussion only pertains to allocation of land for guesthouses in the MOT-approved tourism ventures on inhabited islands. It uses a tone that disapproves of building guesthouses on local community islands, which “limit the potential for inappropriate, non-viable and ill-advised developments” and “island councils are new, inexperience and under-resourced. Their advisors tend to have a limited view of tourism industry” (MOTAC, 2013b, p. 23). Such tones reflect the views expressed by the industry elites on the local community participating in the tourism planning and policy-making process. One pioneer and elite resort owner commented,

but if you see most of the far away islands, like the north or in the middle, who is the councillor there? Who is on that island is the least educated you can say... Maybe one of them is very educated but...if they were they would be in Male’ trying to fulfil their ambitions to go to the next level in their lives. So who is that on the island? One of our dhoani crew was elected as one of the councillors. He called us and said that, I don’t know how to read and write. So what can he contribute to the country? What kind of dialogue can he have with anybody? So for me, the basic thing is that, the council must be educated. But how will you do that. That’s a hell of a journey. Because the minute you are educated, you want to fly. You don’t want to be in that nest. ..So we have to see things in a much broader perspective. We were spending millions and millions for councils you know. But why, whose idea was that? It’s the craziest idea. The people who sought the idea convinced us that in New Zealand, it is done like this, and in European countries, it is done like this. Okay, the idea is like that. But I know for sure, you have a mayor, and a deputy mayor, and then you have people chosen from the public to attend council meetings, who are paid for every

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meeting. But here it is not so. So somebody hoodwinked us into thinking that this is what we do. And then it turned, and the politicians took it as a fantastic thing and they campaigned for this guy, used them as a political tool. So when you use them as a political tool, you need the loudest mouth on the island. I don't think we can achieve anything productive from these councils. (Respondent 23)

Under such distrust and lack of confidence in and respect for local institutions and local communities the Fourth Tourism Master Plan itself fails to empower or propose a meaningful participation process for the local communities. Further, it places limitations on what can be consulted on. It does not allow local communities to share and decide on local resources such as uninhabited islands and lagoons that are common resources for both the community and tourism. The Master Plan views local community islands as a “service centre,” rather than a tangent community that shares common resources and could decide its own future using the surrounding resources as a partner to tourism development. Such a position of both government and tourism sector can be explained by the power struggles described in Chapter 6 that exist between the different stakeholders in the tourism development planning in the Maldives (Bowen et al., 2016; Scheyvens, 2011).

Reviewing and analysing the data from the fieldwork suggests that both the government and the private sector limit community participation to no further than the level termed as “induced participation” in all three atoll case sites as per Tosun’s (1999) typology. Tosun further describes this form of participation as: passive participation, “where people are merely involved in implementation of decision about which they were not consulted” (p. 120); indirect participation, where the community does not have the opportunity to engage directly with the authorities responsible for decision making on community concerns, conflicts and issues, but can only engage “on a group basis via popular elected legislature, trade union and peasant union ... and political parties” (p. 120); Formal participation, which “is officially structured and sanctioned. Rules and content of participation are determined by government” (p. 120); and pseudo-participation, which “refers to a kind of participation of a community in implementation or the ratification of decisions already taken by external bodies” (p. 120).

In addition, the evidence from interviews from all three broad categories, government, private sector, and local community, confirm the characterisation of the community involvement as

“induced participation.” One community member (former Atoll/island chief) from Baa Atoll described participation in TDP as a step of “letting us [Atoll and Island Chiefs] know” that there will be a tourist resort in their neighbourhood (Respondent 58). Other Atoll and Island Chiefs complained that they often find out a resort is being built in their atoll, or in proximity to their island, when the resort builder or operator starts their building activities on the specific island, when the builders seek local wage workers on their project, or in the media (Respondent 58). As such, there was little way that they could channel the concerns of the community for losing an island or lagoon to which they previously enjoyed access. One island councillor (Respondent 42) explicitly expressed his fear of losing his position and fear of being targeted politically if he had voiced concerns of the community instead of promoting and selling the tourism projects by explaining benefits such as how many jobs tourism creates for the island instead of highlighting the marginalised groups’ concerns.

While he expressed the community’s resentment that his island community did not benefit except for a few jobs that the tourist resort created, he strongly complained about enclave tourism policy excluding local communities from supplying their farm, handicraft, and seafood products and, most importantly, that jobs are not guaranteed for the local community. Often cheap labour from neighbouring countries replaces locals, whose demands are little more than to visit family on a daily or weekly basis. Similar grievances were expressed by an LGA official:

We hear from the news that a so and so island is now a resort island or lagoon is for tourism purpose. There is no participation or consultation prior. It is a sad situation.
(Respondent 15)

The issues highlighted in individual atoll cases have been highlighted in previous Tourism Master Plans, such as the Second Tourism Master Plan which recommended disseminating tourism-related information to communities and facilitating their engagement with the sector by linking to other sectors of the economy and also involving communities in the planning stage. While recommendations have been made by an external consultant who often drafts the Tourism Master Plans since the FTMP, the question of why such issues have not been resolved is discussed below.

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While these communities were constantly excluded from participating in decision making and prevented from taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in supplying their products and offer themselves in labour, a more serious conflict was highlighted by local fishermen. All the fishermen who were interviewed from these three communities complained with indignation about losing their bait-fishing grounds (lagoons) and described the process as “manipulative” in most instances and in some cases as passive (Respondents 41, 56, 66, 69). They expressed their concern at losing all bait-fishing grounds and admitted that the TDP, as it is, creates current and future conflicts between local community and tourist resort owners or developers.

One of the fishermen from Baa Atoll (Respondent 56) described such conflicts:

We go early morning for bait fishing to the nearby lagoons before heading far to catch tuna...almost every day we are chased by tourist resort staff while we are catching bait. They say it's our lagoon, tourist don't like etc. and sometimes we don't leave... we continue catching bait and they call police and we are asked to leave. We hardly have a lagoon to catch bait fish or reef fish. Now it's all given to tourist resort or Bio Reserve. We don't know when, we don't know which lagoon is for who. We have no place to complain and island council says there is nothing they could do... All we know is we are constantly chased and we now have to go to far atolls to catch bait.

These conflicts were echoed by tourist resort owners/operators and government officials (Fieldnotes 1 and 2) and they confirmed such conflicts had been occurring. To this date there are no official channels whereby fishermen can raise these concerns collectively with the tourism development process. The reasons for such limitations to participation are discussed in Section 7.3. These issues have increased rapidly as Maldivian fishermen practice pole and line fishing. As close-by lagoons become restricted they have to travel to far atolls in search of lagoons that are not restricted yet, thus increasing the cost of fishing. Coupled with such restrictions, fishermen from the islands expressed their concerns that they had experienced years of low fish catch due to changes in tuna migration that resulted from climate change issues (Fieldnotes 3, 4, and 5). Conflicts arising from the boundary regulations, not only restrict resource sharing of lagoons, but it is also evident that some island communities cannot use the lagoons shared with a resort for personal recreation purposes or for any other purpose.

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Therefore, this demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of the conflict that lies deep within the current TDP. While such concerns were observed, a new regulation on lagoon boundaries of tourist resorts was recently formulated and enacted by government without any form of participation of these communities and later two revisions were made without any consultation of these communities.

Findings from interviews with both the private sector and government can be questioned with regard to commitment to active involvement and empowerment of local communities in TDP and allowing these communities to participate in decision-making matters of tourism. Despite the Atoll and Island Council being in place since 2010, and the introduction of tourism in Gaaf Alif Atoll, interviews with the community members revealed that there were no consultation meetings with the community. Both tourism officials and community leaders said that these island communities have been requesting the government open a tourist resort in their atoll for employment and livelihood opportunities. Such desperate requests do not validate the lack of consultation and or opportunity to directly participate in the TDP by these communities. Similar concerns by fishermen were echoed by other segments within the community such as farmers who lost access to close-by uninhabited islands that they traditionally used for farming and women who used palm leaves and other materials for their livelihood activities in the absence of other employment activities. One fisherman complained that these decisions come over night and there is no consultation before or after the decision.

I am not against tourism in our atoll, nor it is all bad for the community...but all I am saying is we should be consulted first. Government did not ask our atoll and island councillors. These islands and lagoons are part our atoll, it is ours. We should have the opportunity to participate. (Respondent 56)

A technical committee member suggested that decisions were pre-determined and tightly controlled by agenda of MOT and tourist resort owners:

All decisions were being made by people who have direct blessing of tourist industry elites. Every member is handpicked by these elites and Minister of Tourism. I don't think there was ever any room for community concerns on the agenda. Then again, 2008 elections forced these Government Committees members and Minister to

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negotiate to change policy to allow community-based guesthouse for tourists. These elites does not like this policy in motion. (Respondent 15)

It is important to highlight that community involvement in TDP in all three atolls was limited to MOT officials providing information on laws and regulations. It was found that certain individuals and groups within the community had access to resort owners and tourism officials that brought little influence to attract employment opportunities. Such relationships that depended on resort management's interests in close-by islands brought in CSR projects such as tables and chairs for an island school or funding an event by an island development NGO. However, these individuals or groups seldom had any direct influence in decision making or could change a decision on resort island allocation or have any say on how decisions were made with regard to how resorts operated in their respective atoll. In some cases, in all three atolls some local people developed informal social access to government officials and resort owners and operators. Such arrangements allowed for "handling" conflicts in an informal setting before they escalated into situations where state institutions such as community police have to intervene.

This section has set out the broad parameters of community involvement in the tourism development process in the Maldives. According to the local communities, the officials of MOT paid little attention to social issues and involvement of local community. At the early stages of the tourism development process, external consultants consulted and listened to the views of outer local communities (exclusively with Atoll and Island Chiefs) from far atolls, but the final framing of policies was not aligned to local communities (MOT, 1983a, 1983b). While such consultations were rare in the last two master plans, changes in laws and regulations mean most decisions are taken solely by government officials in consultation with the private sector (Respondent 2). Participation of the community only takes place to provide information to various external and domestic researchers for the ministry and surveys. However, individuals and groups who are privileged and have access to the Minister of Tourism and MPs can voice their concerns, which does not necessarily translate into a shift in policy. This is mainly due to the fact that policies that favour tourism over the community have been transformed into tourism law and different regulations and policies set in the master plan. Section 7.3 will be a discussion on how the actual process of participation takes place using a

more recent case of Tourist Act revision in 2016, by examining the process that took place. If a community is deprived of their access to lagoons or islands or is concerned over the lack participation in tourism in their atoll, they can register their concern with one of these privileged individuals or groups, for them to convey the concerns to the minister. Another option available to the community is to register their concern with an MP, who may submit to the parliament a revision in the law or regulation which requires a two-thirds majority of MPs to pass. After analysing all recent (2011 to 2016) discussions in parliament with regard to amendments to tourism law, regulations and new regulations, it was found there was no mention of community participation in decision making or in the tourism development process by a single MP. Such an absence can be attributed to the heavy presence of resort owners as MPs in the parliament, discussing conflicting issues without abstaining themselves and having undue influence on the politics and media of the Maldives through their financial contributions. The next section examines the process of “induced participation” (Tosun, 1999).

7.3 Barriers to Participation

Given that the form of participation solicited by the MOT and tourism sector falls within “induced participation” (Tosun, 1999) over the last 45 years, this section examines this level of participation. This is done by asking the following questions derived from Bramwell and Sharman (2000), where they highlighted three sets of community participation issues in tourism planning as presented in Figure 2-1 in Chapter 2.

Although three different atolls researched in this study had different contextual realities as highlighted in Chapter 4, I consider that Kaafu Atoll experienced development of tourism in a much more authoritarian and unfavourable socio-economic and political environment. Local communities were mostly illiterate and fishing was the life blood of these communities. They were experiencing hardship due to the strained trade relationship with Sri Lanka which had imposed a fishing quota on Maldives fish imports, and the government was heavily centralised. Against all these factors, some island communities, such as the indigenous community of Giraavaru, were relocated to Hulumale’ from Giraavaru Island that was then transformed into a tourist resort island within a few months. This community was again relocated to Male’ for the expansion of the international airport. The fate of this indigenous community within the context of political ecology reveals not only displacement, disempowerment and dispossession

of their homes; but also how the whole process led to the loss of their unique culture and heritage. Many uninhabited islands that were used for livelihood and recreational purposes by local communities were transformed into tourist resorts over the course of a decade. A few uninhabited islands such as Feydhoo Finolhu Island were under the care of an institution such as the Defence Force or Police for official state purposes and access for communities was rarely granted. Other islands that were too small for such transformation came to be under the care of one of the satellite islands that both the community and resort could use. But over the course of the last few years such islands have also been transformed into tourist resort islands, even in the face of heavy resistance from the residents of Male', who are in a privileged position to voice their concerns. A good example of this is the recent selling of Feydhoo Finolhu Island to a Chinese firm for US\$4 million, without any bidding process or consultations with stakeholders (Mihna, 2016). Indian authorities expressed their concerns about this decision, which adds to the continued concerns raised by India due to the increase in influence of Chinese commercial and strategic interests in the Maldives since the February 2012 coup (Mihna, 2017). Currently there are a few islands in the Kaafu Atoll region that are accessible to local communities for their recreation or other purposes, but under the care of tourist resorts. All islands, including lagoons, are leased long term for tourist resort operations.

While island communities around the Kaafu Atoll experience tourism development within a more restricted context, Baa Atoll communities experience development of tourism of the atoll in an overlapping timeframe when the tourism sector experiences heavy government regulations, the same period in which the FTMP and Second Tourism Master Plan were formulated. Some scholars described this period as “a period of retrenchment as power is ceded to private entrepreneurial activity” (Bowen et al., 2016, p. 7). During this period, these communities experienced opportunities for education and higher literacy rates, while healthcare facilities, access to electricity and other basic services were extremely poor. At the same time, the era marks a period of continued lowered freedoms and basic rights. Given the large number of local island communities engaged in fisheries and other traditional activities, and the more recent Bio Reserve project, Baa Atoll local communities are even more unique in the study.

In contrast, Gaafu Alif Atoll is a more fishing-based community with its own distinct cultural background that is different from the atolls in the centre region of the Maldives and has experienced direct tourism development in an era of democratic reform shaping state institutions. While it also coincided with the change in guesthouse policy, these communities were unable to take advantage of these democratic reforms and the operation of guesthouses due to their lack of decision-making power at this community level and the lack of key infrastructure facilities such as water and sanitation, electricity and a reliable transportation system within the atoll.

This section examines the planning decisions made with regard to tourism policy-making processes, by analysing if there is any link between local community input and conflicts/concerns of different segments of the community. The following themes emerged from the data analysis:

7.3.1 No community input and limited space for influence

Despite National Development Plans and Tourism Master Plans beginning to be formulated during the early years of President Maumoon, from 1985 and 1984 respectively, these two plans were not aligned with each other until the 7th National Development Plan (NDP) in 2007 and the corresponding Third Tourism Master Plan (MOT, 2007). These NDPs were formulated by consulting local communities at Atoll and Island Development Committee levels to allow these communities to participate in policy formulation at a broader level. These NDPs provided a framework upon which government policies and implementations were laid. Even then, one of the senior government officials commented that,

we didn't discuss tourism development policies in the Atoll and Island Development committees for 7th NDP, but we did discuss it within agriculture and fisheries policies, how local farmers and fishermen can sell their products and also how locals can get jobs in resorts.(Respondent 10)

The 3-year period of President Nasheed's government was based on the Strategic Action Plan, which was based on the Action Plan (MDP-Manifesto) that his party formulated with broader community-level participation and consultation on different islands running up to the 2008 elections. The outcome of such a wider consultation and participation by a political party allowed it to incorporate guesthouse tourism for local islands in the Action Plan. However,

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since 2013, the National Planning Department has been abolished, so there is an absence of a National Strategic Plan. Although all Tourism Master Plans and other planning documents did make reference to atoll communities and up-lifting their socio-economic conditions, only the recent Master Plan (Fourth Tourism Master Plan) makes reference to inclusive development, particularly with reference to women as a marginalised segment of the community. However, there is no clear evidence in the research data of attempts by tourism planners to gather socio-economic information related to these communities. Nor has any input or feedback from communities come through any consultations that have been incorporated into these plans. The more recent lagoon boundary regulations drafted by the MOT and enacted by the President and the 8th Amendment to Tourism Act 1999 as discussed above, strongly reflect the lack of community input and concerns, excluding fishermen from their bait-fishing grounds. A senior parliament member interviewed (Respondent 11) commented on such regulations:

We usually get the drafted regulation or amendment of tourism law from Ministry of Tourism...parliament subcommittee then discusses the matter and brings it to the floor and each political party was given a specific time to comment on the main floor. It usually took only one week for the parliament to approve these regulations. In my 20 or more years at the parliament and government, I have never seen atoll communities or individual communities or community leaders consulted in these matters.
(Respondent 11)

Analysis of key documents, particularly the Tourism Master Plans and interviews with the key officials of different time periods reveals that consultation meetings with island community chiefs or Island Development Committees helped the external consultants in advising the government on the boundaries for resort islands and local communities in the first two Tourism Master Plans. These two Master Plans were mostly drafted by external consultants. While recalling such consultations by Atoll and Island Chiefs from three atolls, Respondents 58, 46, and 40 commented that they were limited to the island development councils and did not take into account different segments within the community. They also highlighted that often fishermen were away fishing when these teams of external consultants arrived on the islands and, mostly, they left before the weekend, when fishermen were on the island and thus any formal input from their visit to the island was impossible. While they also highlighted discussions on these issues such as boundaries and other later amendments to the Tourism Act

1999 and tourism-related regulations, these have never taken place with any island community stakeholders, therefore specific concerns of communities were excluded from the regulations and policies that later came into effect.

One senior policy maker commented on the process as follows:

There were two master plans done when I was appointed, the third master plan I was in-charge of. I looked at..., I always look past and my experience where they have done mistakes and what they have done. What are the fundamental issues I found was that they heavily engaged foreign experts. Foreign experts and these guys come only for two minutes. So they will meet lots people. And hear the stories.... And they are writing their stories. They are not doing a proper master plan... So this was what I learned from the past. It was a narrative,... okay this man said this... so therefore this is this...Of course they may have document, But I needed more than that...I needed directions or guidance or policy frame works. So what I did was when I started doing the master plan during my time I got the industry and the governments sit in committees. And thrash out all their problems. Both sides open hearted. Whether you agree or not.
(Respondent 8)

This highlights how policies and plans were made prior to the Third Tourism Master Plan, while plans since Third Tourism Master Plan have been much more structured and inclusive of the tourism sector businesses, as discussed above, the process has excluded local communities.

7.3.2 Absence of prior information to communities

The analysis of the data from different stakeholders and documents revealed that island communities were not provided with any prior information during the reviewing or formulation of the Tourism Master Plan or changes in law or regulation. A senior policy maker who served as the former Minister of Tourism, Minister of Planning and National Development in Gayoom's government and later as the senior advisor to the President until 2012, highlighted that the primary reason for exclusion of community in giving prior information could be attributed to the way the industry was perceived and has remained unchanged over the course of years. He explained that perception as:

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First of all it was... considered an evil industry. Even for two reasons. One is “haram” echehi keun. Alcohol, pork and mi echehi genaun (consuming prohibited things like Alcohol and pork [under Islamic Sharia] and importing such items to the country). The other one is nudity, which is against the Islamic principles. We guys are 100% fundamental community... extreme community. So under that influence and against the early years of the President Gayoom, you know coming from Al-Azhar University background,... You know he cemented that. And therefore it was considered as such. Now why it has not... I mean affected (positively) the other economic sectors and the people of Maldives is because it was deliberate policy. My belief is, it was done deliberately by the government. By having that perception of an evil industry, they don't want people to participate in it first of all. (Respondent 8)

Similar opinions resonated in the interviews with Atoll and Island Chiefs who explained why they think information was not provided prior to TDP. What is most striking is the observation that similar views or perceptions are still held by some elderly community members (Fieldnotes 3), which therefore discourage young people (especially women) from going to work in resorts. While such perceptions were found promoted by the few religious scholars during the enactment of the Guesthouse regulation, there have been no attempts by the government to build a dialogue between the industry and communities with scholars from different fields, including religious scholars.

7.3.3 Trust and misconception on both sides

The MOT, since its formation in early 1980s, has been a one-shop window for the tourism sector and is responsible for negotiating, regulating and formulating and implementing policies. While such an institutional structure has aided the government to work very closely with the industry, which was previously not transparent and lacked representativeness, it has alienated the communities and all other sectors from engaging with the tourism sector. The MOT is responsible for dissemination of information. As such it does this through the tourism promotion arm of the ministry to various tourist destinations. During the fieldwork it was observed that there are no structures or mechanisms in place to provide information to island communities or the general public. However, some efforts were made during the Baa Atoll Bio Reserve project to inform about government decisions regarding the Bio Reserve. Two

comments from interviewees highlighted the issues of trust, misconception and coordination within these institutions:

We never had consultation prior to resort island allocation decision, ...we hear about the allocation on news or get a letter stating that so and so island is allocated for tourist resort purpose... why we don't get consulted on such matters may due to lack trust that we will go behind such discussions with the community and underplay on behalf of the community and our representative sector [Fisheries and Agriculture]. (Respondent 5)

It is not only the island communities that have no idea how policies and regulations are made in the tourism industry, the Faculty of hospitality and tourism studies have never been part of planning process. I don't know why the faculty is not in the loop, we usually consult MOT and other tourism stakeholders for designing our courses and training people. May the MOT and industry do not believe we could offer good input into their planning process. (Respondent 5)

7.4 Limitations to Community Participation

Scholars have argued the importance of community involvement in successful TDP (Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 2000). While effective participation ensures that both the tourism sector and local communities benefit mutually by enabling inclusive development that could lead to sustainable tourism development, Tosun (2000) highlights three key limitations to community participation. Tosun (2000) argues that, in developing countries, practical participation in the decision making of TDP is difficult due to limitations at the operational level, structural limitations and finally cultural limitations. He argues that the prevailing social, political, cultural and economic structures reflect the power structures at different scales, centralisation of power, domination of elites, low level of awareness and lack of knowledge about tourism among local communities. Thus he argues that prior to empowering local communities by allowing them to participate in decision making in TDP, changes to socio-economic and political structures are a prerequisite.

The following five themes emerged from the data analysis that indicated the limitations of community participation in TDP in the Maldives in all three case study sites that reflected Tosun's (2000) limitations at the operational, structural and cultural levels.

7.4.1 Exclusion from TDP

A respondent from Baa Atoll who is the current president of an NGO and a former Island Chief (Respondent 47) complained about the lack of opportunity to participate in TDP and the community being unable to take part in any consultation process despite tourist resorts having operated in their atoll since 1994.

In my experience in the Baa Atoll community as the Island Chief and a member of a NGO responsible for island development, I have never come across any consultation with the community with regard to tourism sector policies or regulations. We feel totally excluded from tourism policy...I feel it's the government policy. Without any exception, all governments so far had this policy of excluding us. It is as if the government and tourist resorts owners telling us, "it's none of your business." This is irrespective of whether you are a Atoll Chief or Island Chief...Whether government allocates one of our islands to tourism or takes it away from one developer and give it to another developer, we have never been consulted. (Respondent 47)

Tourism in Gaafu Alif Atoll was introduced after the democratic reform and enactment of decentralisation law. Although the political environment is conducive to community consultations on TDP, the evidence suggests the opposite. The gradual introduction of tourism to this atoll has produced serious conflicts and issues for local communities that are marginalised by more powerful tourism elites. One of the Island Councillors (Respondent 71) explained why he thinks these communities are excluded from the TDP and left helpless in the process:

If we are part of the decision-making or policy making process, then they know we will know how much money the industry is making, what is going on and what is really happening between tourism industry and government or politicians... then our people will demand more direct benefits to our islands and atoll from close-by resort. Keeping us out of the process makes us blind to changes in policy. Our community cannot demand for direct decision-making power, because we need tourist resorts for jobs and supplying our agricultural products and fish...I feel now we have to beg for simple things from these... Like trying to selling our fish and agricultural products. (Respondent 71)

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An interviewee (Respondent 36) from Kaafu Atoll further explained that despite the same experience of exclusion from TDP, with the reintroduction of guesthouses in the local community islands, there is now a window of opportunity for local community members to engage in TDP with regard to guesthouses only.

One of the government officials (Respondent 3) explained why the government cannot directly consult communities regarding TDP, by highlighting several limitations in the process. The respondent explained that:

We can of course consult, the local community members or Atoll council or Island council, but first, they have no the experience or knowledge of tourism activities. Second, we are under pressure from policy level and industry key people to formulate policies on specific time frame, consultation is time consuming. It is also costly to fully consult every island on these matters. We have limited technical staffs in the ministry, mostly we have to bring experts from the outside the country, United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has been giving us support in terms of development in terms of tourism expansion. (Respondent 3)

While MOT officials highlight the time and cost limitations for inclusive TDP, others argue that existing local and national institutions outside the tourism domain are not even being consulted in the TDP that could eventually lead to greater participation of island communities (Respondent 15). A local government authority (LGA) official (Respondent 15) highlighted that one thing that is common in all three case study sites, or the whole of Maldives island communities, despite the tourism development experience for a respective island community, is the “heavy centralised system of governance and elite dominance” (Respondent 15). The official further explained why these island communities are excluded despite the necessary laws and institutions in place:

I think there are couple of reasons why these community members are excluded from tourism planning and decision making, even though decentralisation law is supposed to empower these communities. First, let us ask ourselves what will happen if tomorrow island communities are consulted on tourism development issues? If communities are consulted, current conflicts between island communities and tourism industry will magnify and become contagious and difficult to resolve.... Look at what happen when

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some tourism employees advocated for fair pay and improved working condition for local resort employees in somewhere around 2009 or 2010, it ended up in employees losing and industry winning.... Even now LGA gets regular complains from island communities over the loss access to uninhabited island for their recreation and other uses. Fisherman complains of their loss of access to lagoons for bait and reef fishing. So, I think the conflict is swept “under the rug” with no solution for these communities. I think second reason is due to low level capacity within these communities to address these issues. Most of these islands have no knowledge of what’s going on in these tourist resorts. Despite these islands very close by, they are two very different worlds. There is no way for them to build capacity on their own. We (LGA) are trying to increase the capacity of Atoll and Island councils with trainings, but centralised mentality of policy makers makes it challenging for us despite the law in place. (Respondent 15)

The official commented that the lack of coordination within relevant institutions such MOT, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture and other key authorities makes it even more difficult for them to voice community concerns across limited national-level meetings and discussions.

Respondents from number of local community-based NGOs (Respondents 46, 67), women’s development committees (WDC) (Respondents 38, 45, 52, 62, and 72) and two national NGOs (one of which was an NGO advocating for women’s rights) (Respondent 12, 19) highlighted that TDP systematically excluded local island communities from participation for number of reasons such as continued discrimination against women and local tourism employees, use of tourism as a power-wielding tool in politics, and the marginalisation of islanders by the centre.

7.4.2 Lack of proper information

Data analysis revealed that there were no public briefing sessions to provide island communities information on any TDP. WDC, fisherman and farmers within all three atoll communities expressed discontent over the lack of information and participation at the TDP. When probed about the awareness of the “tourist resort islands lagoon boundary regulations,” 5 years since its introduction, 98% of interview participants from all three atoll communities were unaware of this regulation. Since the regulation came to existence in 2012, there have been two major revisions, one in 2014 and another in November 2016. A simple data analysis of a parliamentary committees discussions on the floor for all three documents revealed that

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there was no effort made to provide any information to island communities, nor to the LGA. Further discussion on the parliamentary floor failed to even mention the on-going conflict between the local fishermen over their loss of access to lagoon for reef fish and bait fish. These communities often depended on word of mouth or tourist resort operators for information about such regulations or changes to regulations.

A former Attorney General explained in his interview that though democratic channels to discuss developmental issues pertaining to communities have been guaranteed by constitutional reforms since 2008, community concerns and issues with regard to tourism policy are “strangely excluded” (Respondent 1). He highlighted that they are often non-transparent, few within the tourism industry are involved in the TDP and how policies evolve is unknown. He commented that major amendments in tourism law and regulations that are obviously in conflict with the communities get approved by parliament as lobbied by MATI and other tourism elites and proposed by MOT. One of the most striking things is that these changes in the laws and regulations are discussed in parliamentary committees which are sometimes chaired by a tourist resort owner or in their presence as a member of the committee. He highlighted several members are tourist resort owners and yet several conflicting issues have been decided on without any participation of communities. Therefore, he suggested that, in such an environment, communities not having access to TDP information works in favour of the tourism sector.

One of the elderly island chiefs (Respondent 40) commented that it is not true that people don't want to be part of tourism due to selling alcohol or pork, but, on the contrary, his understanding is that several community members want to take part in tourism activities and also want to participate in decision making, but the island chief highlighted they have no way to access information about how the tourism policy gets decided. He also admitted the low level of education among the residents of these island communities, where most of the educated population seek to migrate to Male' or seek employment in resorts. Thus, he highlighted that opportunity to seek education within these communities could empower them to participate in the TDP in the near future.

7.4.3 Socio-religious barrier

A senior manager (Respondent 34) of Baa Atoll tourist resort claimed the island communities' exclusion from participation in TDP was voluntary; he attributed this to their attitudes and socioreligious perception of tourism. However, such an argument was contested by two different local island community segments. A surprising finding was made with regard to WDC from all the three atoll communities. Despite WDC being in place for island governance issues and national planning purposes and more recently mandated by decentralisation law, all the interviewees of WDCs complained that WDCs were just a formality and women rarely get the chance to participate in discussions at island development meetings or national planning meetings, where men dominate such discussions. None of the members interviewed recall attending a meeting to discuss a tourism issue. When asked why they feel that is happening, they responded by highlighting that there is a misconception that is tied to social and religious factors. First, it is believed women are "not safe" in the tourist resorts as the current enclave resort concept. Second, looking after the family domestically is still the dominant perception of the role of women in Maldives culture and only a few resorts allow their employees to leave after work to their respective islands and often such cases are limited to resorts that are close by a community island. Therefore, women dominate as the residents of these island communities (men generally leave the island for employment), some respondents felt, the social and religious factors could be at play as a limitation for island communities not consulted on TDP.

7.4.4 Institutional gap

One of the former atoll chiefs who later served as a Tourism Minister and several other senior policy positions (Respondent 6) explained in his interview that there is an institutional vacuum that is apparent between the tourism sector and local communities. He highlighted that with the current institutional arrangements, there are no reasons (operational or legal) why there should be any formal communication between atoll or island councils, local communities, and the tourism sector from the tourism industry side. He further stated that despite local communities losing traditional rights and use over lagoons and islands, there is no institution that could address or challenge issues and conflicts on behalf of these communities. Similarly, an institutional vacuum is found on the environmental aspects with regard to the local communities and tourism sector. Current institutional arrangements are set in an order that

allows all the decisions regarding the tourism sector to be unilaterally undertaken by the MOT, except the approvals by the Environmental Protection Agency for various environmental matters for all sector projects including tourism, until recently. But since August 2015, the government has changed the regulation and given the MOT the mandate to approve EIAs, which was clearly a questionable decision that was made after the lobbying of the tourism sector. One of the policy-level officials from the Ministry of Environment and Energy (Respondent 13) commented in the respondent interview that since the tourism sector depends on the environment for the premium prices it gets from tourists, it has more environmentally sustainable practices in place, while local island practices such as building harbours are possibly the largest factor causing environmental damage to the Maldives islands and its lagoons. Yet the respondent argued that due to the disconnect between the local community and the tourism sector in terms of institutional arrangement, none have been able to pass on the environmental good practices of the industry to the locals and vice versa while taking each other's concerns on board.

Some may argue that the democratisation and constitutional reform process that the country has undergone since 2007, opening its door to more multi-party elections, should have filled that vacuum with political parties that represent these communities. A senior retired policy maker (Respondent 8) highlighted why it had not filled that vacuum, by pointing out that there is only narrow middle class with sharp income inequality, with tourism elites funding these political parties for their own interests. Therefore, he noted that a policy that comes out of these political parties is a reflection of elite interest and bargains that they make as a result of power struggles within domestic politics and communities.

7.4.5 Unwillingness to decentralise

Various respondents commented about why they think the central planners and tourism elites disregard local knowledge and opinion.

you know, ...it's also a perception that if we allowed decentralisation... We might have some problems in administration and control. This is also felt. Specially in tourism, ...it's not only my view but what I think others within policy decision makers working with me, when we were leasing tourist facilities, we are able to identify which places where we want to develop. But when it comes to decentralisation... and

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people's initiatives like guesthouse development and another component which is safari development, the Government or the Ministry of Tourism will has little say in there. (Respondent 4)

Some of the tourist resort owners who were also among the pioneers shared their negative experiences in the past and how they have shaped such unwillingness and lack of trust by communities to make decentralisation work in an amicable manner that benefits both tourism and local communities.

I have had experiences where we have had one island people come in sailing dhoani from neighbouring island to our resorts and cut Kurumba's [coconuts] and sell it to the guests. When the General Manager came to stop them, they have tied the General Manager to a coconut tree. ... And where they have come to pirate our guests, they come in sailing dhoani and they take 5 dollars and take them out for sailing trips and bring them back. But we are responsible for these tourists you see. So we have had these things happening. But at the end of the day, when the island councils came, who is the councillor? It is the person who tied him up. They came in unregistered boats so you couldn't see a registration. But this person is the councillor. So what will come out of that island council? And if you see, not Male' atoll maybe, but if you see most of the far away islands, like the north or in the middle, who is the councillor there? Who is on that island is the least educated you can say. (Respondent 22)

Such mistrust and lack of respect and trust by resort owners finds it difficult for tourism industry and local communities to see eye to eye on different issues, concerns and potential opportunities for all. Some island council respondents highlighted the actions that are required for communities to be able to effectively participate in TDP. One of the councillors (Respondent 42) argued the need for filling various "communication gaps" between the tourism sector, government and the local community. Another councillor (Respondent 71) admitted the lack of capacity in the island councils, but urged the tourism resort owners and government to be bit more "flexible," "adaptable, and "patient." He pointed out that island communities want tourist resorts in their atolls and see the benefits of tourism, but communities want a more equitable involvement in the tourism development that has room for "their knowledge, opinions and aspirations" (Respondent 71).

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The core problem was admitted by local government agency official:

Their [Government and MATI] attitude must change towards island communities. They must be able to see such a change in governance can be mutually beneficial to the sector and the communities. But first there must be respect and trust on both sides. Which I think is not there. Current centralised system works in favour of tourism resort owners. There must be a supportive policy framework across various government ministries and agencies, not just with LGA. (Respondent 15)

While MOT officials highlighted the challenges in decentralisation of its functions as:

Actually, we started that. We came across lot of issues. One thing is we haven't developed the capacity of councils. Actually, undertake these functions. Expecting once we can give a task and it will happen something that doesn't necessarily happen in the way we want. Once we started this..., we know, we still have to train these councils. And also, they need to have specific people or at least they should have mandated people with the role and function to undertake monitoring and inspections of tourist facilities. (Respondent 4)

7.5 Summary of Findings

This chapter has demonstrated that there are number of barriers and limitations to participation which centre around restructuring the exercise of power.

Community involvement in TDP for the three atoll communities followed broadly similar features and characteristics. The process that the MOT has followed throughout the history of tourism in the Maldives conforms to “induced participation,” in which communities are indirectly engaged in the consultation after the decisions have been made by advisory committees that largely consisted of industry elites and government officials, controlled and designed by the MOT and tourism industry. There is clear evidence that various economic and social assessments conducted by other agencies such as UN agencies, has helped to shape tourism policies to allow channelling various economic benefits such as the creation of employment opportunities for local island communities in tourist resorts and the opportunity to sell local handicrafts and few agricultural products. But there is no evidence that these assessments helped shape policies in the Master Plans and in the general TDP with community input prior to the formulation of these plans. There is evidence that communities were

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consulted after an allocation of an island for a tourism resort and before the building of the resort for the EIA. However, the data analysis and similar studies showed that such consultations did not reach and engage with the wider cross-section of island communities, often leaving behind the concerns and conflicts of women, fishermen and other traditional sectors in the community. The limited consultation after the decisions to allocate islands or lagoons were made may have had an adverse impact on the sustainability of the tourism industry and the current marginalised state of local island communities. We could therefore argue that these communities were systematically excluded from TDP and this has reinforced the marginalisation of these outer island communities since the formal governance of these island communities came into existence.

While formal channels to participate in decision-making processes of tourism planning was characterised as passive or pseudo-participation, the data analysis showed that there were informal channels open for a few privileged key players within these communities alongside formal channels. These key players liaise with tourism industry elites, government officials and policy makers to wield a complex power structure, which has sustained the current TDP. These players at times have played a pivotal role as agents within these communities, who have access to tourism elites, who could broker, on behalf of the community, basic community requests such as financial assistance for a school class room or assistance for a community-led NGO event or employment opportunity for women or youth. However, these key players do not take part in any informal or formal mode of involvement in decision making with regard to TDP in an island-specific issue. Often these key players are privileged individuals who belong to an influential family, both socially and politically, and are always men. This leaves the most marginalised, especially women, local fishermen and farmers. Such a failure to have an inclusive TDP is a result of various other factors attributed to interplays of power, cultural and social forces within these communities. This chapter has demonstrated the complexity of the underlying simple issue of community participation in TDP.

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Chapter 8 Economic Development Opportunities for Local Communities

8.1 Introduction

Scholars have argued that tourism development can be an effective tool for economic development of local communities if these communities can be integrated into tourism and inclusive opportunities can be promoted (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). While tourism brought about a huge transformation at the national and, to a lesser extent, the local level, I argue that these transformations were not in favour of the local community due to the absence of their meaningful participation at both the decision-making level and in opportunities for economic development activities that are related to the natural resources surrounding these communities. The two analytical themes that emerged from the data collected from local communities were: “transformation of island community lives” and “denied access to natural resources.” Of these two themes, the latter theme is seen to be the most critical (reflecting restriction of resources to local communities), hindering the economic development activities of the local communities. The processes of these restrictions as described by the local community participants can be summed up in three stages: first *enclosure*, where an artificial lagoon boundary surrounding an uninhabited island to be developed as a resort was created by the one-island-one-resort policy; second, *appropriation*, where a process of appropriation took place gradually, culminating in the 2012 boundary regulation; finally *dispossession*, where local communities were deprived of access to their natural resources that were directly linked to their economic development activities. Foremost, it is important to acknowledge the fact that these transformations ended in dispossession which is also linked to a historical process, where political, economic and social factors played major roles, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Above all, these communities were marginalised under the guise of environmental protection and a highly centralised and authoritarian governance system.

In this chapter, I investigate the actual evidence of local community participation in tourism development by looking at the limitations and potential opportunities. To do this, I analyse the local community responses to the interview questions with a focus provided by the previous chapter. Besides confirming findings that emerged at the policy level, my aim is to further develop the concept of inclusive tourism development and relevant implications for integrating sustainable tourism development within context-specific conditions.

Structurally, this chapter consists of two thematic sections with relevant sub-sections. In the first section, I present and discuss the various transformations of economic development activities, particularly emerging activities that are linked to tourism. Next, I address the issue of denied access to local communities' natural resources and conflicts that arose out of the property rights that were later enacted using contracts, regulations and laws. Finally, a summary of the findings presented in this chapter and the focus of next chapter is provided.

8.2 Transformation of Economic Development Activities

It is undeniable that the tourism sector transformed the Maldives and its communities in the outer atolls. While such transformation due to tourism led to positive benefits at the macroeconomic level, its impact has transformed, and still continues to transform, these communities at a profoundly complex and structural level within each atoll or individual island, mostly putting these communities at a disadvantageous position as revealed by the data.

8.2.1 Transformation of fishing

Among several other community respondents, one island councillor describes the transformation as:

I think there is plenty of opportunity for these communities to benefit from tourist resorts. They can earn much more than they use to earn traditionally. Take for example fishermen, most of them left tuna fishing since tourism came to this atoll. I remember when I was a kid, Eydhafushi [Baa Atoll Capital island] use to have 22 to 24 big boats that goes for tuna fishing. There are only few boats for that now. Now they go for reef fishing and touring for tourist. Now their fishing is based on tourism exclusively.
(Respondent 42)

The respondent's excerpt clearly narrates that transformation was very real and had occurred gradually over time. Further, while it opened an opportunity to supply reef fish and earn much more, this transformation reduced the number of fishermen tuna fishing around the island and the atoll. This is consistent with the data that was found across all the islands that the study visited in the Baa Atoll and Kaafu Atoll. But the insights collected from Gaafu Alif Atoll suggest that such change has not yet been transformative as tourism in the atoll is in the initial phase and the atoll is still predominately a fisheries-based community. Some might argue this change in fishing is connected to tourism, as reefing gave the fishermen more income relative

to fishing effort and investment needed (Respondent 41); while others argue that wider market changes within the fishing industry led to this (Respondent 5). We need to be careful in our interpretation of the transformations and explore what changes and restrictions have occurred for the communities in terms of their use of the natural resources surrounding them, as a result of tourism development, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

8.2.2 Transformation of farming

The transformation due to the introduction of tourism in these atolls has not only impacted the fisherman, but has also transformed the farming of these local communities. The bulk of the local produce of these farmers was sold to Male' local market, the main market for agricultural producers. However, this was conditional on the availability of transportation to Male' from the respective island. Demand within the atoll community was low and prices in Male' were generally higher (Respondent 55). With the tourist resorts opening in close proximity to these local communities, four transformations occurred for farmers from these communities. First, close-by tourist resorts demanded local vegetables and fruits from these farmers directly and thus dependence on Male' as a market reduced and the market suddenly became closer to these communities. Second, resorts offered higher prices for their produce compared to Male' local market or selling within the island. Such factors also are believed to have inflated prices of produce. Third, the resorts demanded much larger quantities and wider varieties such as water melon, papaya, chilli, and sweet potato and other fruits and vegetables. (Respondent 68). Fourth, uninhabited islands traditionally used for farming were increasingly taken to be transformed into resort islands or leased to resort owners who then used them for different activities such as small-scale farming of their own or as a picnic island for the resort tourists, marketed as a "virgin islands" (Respondents 55 and 2). Another striking finding of the field visits was that none of the islands that I visited had a local market that could function as a hub for buying and selling local products. While this transformation had happened gradually as each community was introduced to tourism, the ability of these farmers to sell their produce was dependent on several factors. External factors were beyond the control of these farmers, such as reliable electricity, regular transportation, and the availability of credit (Respondent 11). Other factors, though, could be controlled, such as those that were more attuned to farmers themselves, such as reliability of supply, and quality assurance. These latter factors also depended on each farmer's ability to communicate with resort management as most travel to

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the resorts after the harvest to sell their produce (Respondent 29). As highlighted earlier, often resorts offer prices that are higher than farmers can get within the atoll community or in Male' local market (Respondent 33). Therefore, they prefer to sell directly to the resorts, which in turn inflates the price of agricultural products within the community, raising the cost of living for local communities on these islands (Respondent 42).

Compared to fishermen, local farmers have more opportunities to sell their produce closer to their islands, expand their existing produce range and receive competitive prices due to tourism. Although the overall transformation has had a negative impact on fishermen, I could argue that it has had a positive influence on the farmers. But farmers have had to face similar challenges to fishermen as more and more islands used for farming have been restricted, as highlighted earlier.



Figure 8-1 A local farmer from Baa Atoll.

Source: Field visit photos

With the restriction of farming on close-by uninhabited islands that are now transformed for tourism purposes, many of the farmers interviewed in Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alifu Atoll highlighted the difficulty of sustaining an island or piece of land for their farming activities.

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Both island councils and farmers noted that with increases in population on their island, it is harder for island councils to designate land for farming, thus the need to farm on close-by uninhabited islands as the only option.

Another interesting finding of field visits was that almost all tourist resorts that I visited had their own farm for different products such as chilli, papaya, fresh leaves, butternut and different types of herbs that could be easily supplied by local farmers. A typical tourist resort in the Maldives can import all its products from abroad, or can produce agricultural products themselves that could be produced by local islanders in the proximity of these resort islands. By having all their operations on their island, resorts can exclude the local communities altogether.



Figure 8-2 A resort farm's fresh leaves, typical in all resorts in Baa Atoll

Source: Field visit photos.



Figure 8-3 Large-scale resort farm growing local chilli

Source: Field visit photos



Figure 8-4 Extensive agricultural production at Soneva Fushi resort, Baa Atoll

Source: Field visit photos

One of farmers from Baa Atoll resonated the concern of many other farmers from Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alifu Atoll over resorts growing their own vegetables, fruits and fresh leaves. The farmer highlighted the number of restrictions that they face in enhancing their farming activities with tourist resorts. He pointed out,

at the beginning they bought a lot of our produces such as chilli, fresh leaves and vegetables, but now they have started to produce most of these produces on the resorts itself. They buy other produces whenever they wish. It is not easy to do farming with these uncertainty. (Respondent 55)

Farmers from these two atolls further pointed out two other interlinked factors that restrict links with tourism and opportunities to enhance these island communities' economic development. Firstly, there are no coordination mechanisms between tourism sector government officials, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture and local councils to facilitate and promote their products. Donor-assisted projects such as annual Partnering for Development (P4D) by UNDP

may be initiated and farmers are assisted during the project lifecycle, but with the end of the project the relevant government agencies fail to maintain this assistance, thus communities are left at the mercy of resort purchasing departments. One farmer from Gaafu Alif Atoll stated that “resort owners are too powerful, they control our parliament members, ministers and councils at times” (Respondent 68). This clearly demonstrates the imbalance in power relations between tourism sectors, other relevant sectors and state institutions, which then marginalise these local communities. Secondly, the lack of basic infrastructure and services such as electricity, fresh water, reliable and cost-effective transportation within and between the atolls, hinders farming activities.

8.2.3 The rise of guesthouses

The operation of guesthouses on local community islands other than Male’ was banned in 1980. As such, from that moment onward, local communities were severely restricted from benefiting from tourism directly. Islands such as Maafushi and Thulusdhoo in Kaafu Atoll had guesthouses before this change. As argued, this restriction came from an elitist political agenda that has a historical context that was meshed with political and social justification that supported an authoritarian form of governance in the Maldives. Thus, I argue that the call for political and governance reform from early 2000 gave birth to two key legislations in sequence. First, the Decentralisation Act 2010, followed by an amendment to tourism regulations that allowed guesthouse operation on local community islands in the same year. Political changes paved the way for local communities to benefit from tourism directly. This led to many guesthouses being opened, particularly close to the one and only International Airport located in Kaafu Atoll, particularly on Maafushi island and other islands close by. With more resorts and seaplane operations between outer atolls, guesthouses have increasingly expanded to other islands, but the sustainability of such ventures remains a daunting issue that is discussed later in this section and in Section 8.3.2.

Guesthouse operations on many islands that I visited have transformed the very essence of these communities at multiple levels. They have also had further implications for other economic development activities of these islands such as fisheries and farming. Farmers and fishermen can directly supply these guesthouses without having to travel to resort islands. Women and youth in particular have a means to get employed without leaving the island and

their family for a prolonged period as they often have to do if they choose to work on a resort island. Several islands have developed more modern buildings as guesthouses, offering high-quality accommodation on their private properties, for which land values have increased rapidly.

From a social aspect, the reintroduction of guesthouses has led to the direct mixing of tourists with locals. There are some mixed feelings about this among the many local community respondents. Some argue that reintroduction of guesthouses on their islands empowers women socially and economically (Respondents 72, 52, and 45). They also argued that island communities now want to keep their islands and beaches clean, compared to the past when waste was often disposed of in areas close to the coast and beach cleaning was not practised. Such activities, they argue, have strengthened the bond and relationships within the island that were slowly eroding as more and more people left the islands for resort and other employment. Further, a former island chief commented that guesthouse operators, either from the island or from outside islands, have constituted a powerful driving force, both politically and economically, which is beneficial, allowing the island community to negotiate with policy makers at the centre for basic services and other projects that directly benefit the community (Respondent 46).

On the other hand, while agreeing that guesthouses benefit economic development, other respondents argued that guesthouses have exposed local communities to values and social practices that directly contradict the Islamic values and cultural practices of these islands (Respondent 39). They further highlighted that at times conflicts between guesthouses and the local community arise due to a tourist walking around the island wearing a bikini. Other times, conflict arises over the allocation of a specific beach area for tourists, mostly called a “bikini beach,” with no beach for locals, particularly if the island is reclaimed and does not have a second beach area for swimming. Central decision making without proper participation of local communities further complicates such grievances and conflicts that arise out of interactions between guesthouse tourists and locals.

One of the key challenges that both island communities and guesthouse operators face is the lack of basic infrastructure such as water and sanitation services, transportation linkages within the island, banking and reliable electricity. One guesthouse operator from Baa Atoll

Dharavandhoo questioned the government's decision to build a domestic airport on their island – currently the second busiest airport in the Maldives. The airport mainly links tourists from the international airport to the resorts in the Baa and other close-by atolls. The guesthouse operators noted that,

We can be proud to say we have a domestic airport on our island, but what does it do for us? Land for airport doesn't generate any income for island council. Our island doesn't have safe water, no sewerage system, no banking services. We got a good harbour that benefits fishermen and boat operators. But these infrastructure is centred on tourist resorts. They bring tourists from international airport and directly transports them to harbour without any stops or visits to the island via speed boat to their resort. Neither does resorts bring tourists to visit our island for island hopping. To some extent last few years we have seen some changes with guesthouses. (Respondent 46)

While such infrastructural challenges have hindered the expansion and development of guesthouses on most islands, further amendments to guesthouse regulations by the current government have restricted island communities from operating guesthouses without such basic services such as a police station, water etc. Some local community guesthouse operators argue that this due to the influence of tourism resort owners who regard guesthouses as competitors for their low market segment (Respondent 46).

Another emerging challenge that forces us to question who really benefits from the expansion of guesthouse in these local communities is that of the rise in number of non-local community groups and individuals who own and operate these guesthouses. Due to several factors, such as lack of investment opportunity, it is common to find local communities which simply lease the land to a foreign travel agent or a relative of a resort owner and move to capital Male' or abroad. Thereby the island gradually becomes a resort island serving tourists.

8.2.4 Transformation of other economic activities

Unlike fishing and farming for men, coir rope making and thatch making used to be the principal economic activity amongst women in the atoll communities. Rope and thatch were used as building materials as thatch roofs were widely used in the Maldives. But with urbanisation and lifestyle changes, traditional thatched roofing is not commonly used today. However, coir rope and thatch are used in the construction of villas in the tourist resorts,

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especially as a roofing material on the villas and in other common areas, enhancing the natural island feel. Therefore, while demand for these products has decreased from the local population, it has been offset by the increase in demand from the tourism sector. At the same time, the prices for these products have also risen as locals were unable to supply the increased demand from tourist resorts. We found several islands in all three atolls which are engaged in these activities.



Figure 8-5 Women of Khihadhoo island/Baa Atoll engaged in ekel brush (iloshifathi) making

Source: Field visit photos

In addition to these directly and indirectly linked economic activities, from the outset of tourism, islands like Maafushi and Thulusdhoo had some tourism-related economic activities, such as the operation of souvenir shops and diving schools. Tourist visits as part of *island hopping* were a result of arrangements/understandings between the island communities and resort owners or operators. However, these instances were very few and limited to a handful of islands in Kaafu Atoll, and were not found in Baa Atoll and Gaafu Alif Atoll, as informed

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by data. Such interactions brought about the most positive experience that was seen by local communities after guesthouses were allowed in 2010.

Data collected from the island communities also revealed that activities such as boat building, electrical engineering and carpentry in these communities are disconnected from the tourist resorts. All resort islands that were visited for the study had their own carpentry workshop and in-house engineering department, with mostly foreign workers employed.



Figure 8-6 Boat builders in Maalhos island/Baa Atoll

Source: Field visit photos

One of the boat builders from Baa Atoll Dharavandhoo Island agreed that there has been a huge transformation in his community due to tourism, but raised his concern that boat building and carpentry work has not changed since tourism as resorts employ their own staff, usually foreigners, as they are cheaper from neighbouring countries, compared to locals.

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Among other economic development activities that are linked to the community, sand mining, extracting sand for construction purposes, is important at the island level as a construction material.

We also find our community may go and take sand from a lagoon that is not allocated to a resort for years. But then suddenly we may find a resort management comes and say you can't use it; it belongs to them. On top of it came Biosphere Reserve that further restricted our activities. (Respondent 42)

As is evident, a number of economic development activities of local communities are linked to lagoons that surround these communities. Some of the activities are traditional activities that are not linked to tourism and others are newly emerged activities linked to tourism. The data revealed that irrespective of their link to tourism, these activities' access to natural resources was denied and, in some cases such as the Biosphere Reserve, restricted without adequately taking their concerns into consideration. Thus, to a large extent, economic development opportunities are restricted due to the manner in which tourism development policy is designed.

The above discussion of the transformation of local community islands due to tourism demonstrates that tourism development has the potential to enhance the local communities' economic development opportunities. However, it reveals that there is a disconnect between local communities' economic activities and activities of tourist resorts. Along with the presence of different forms of transformations, the present study has also revealed another interesting theme related to this transformation, that is denied access to local communities' natural resources. The next section discusses this theme with its sub-themes.

8.3 Denied Access to Natural Resources

The data illustrates that in the absence of local community participation in tourism development policy decisions and policy implementation stages, as discussed in Chapter 7, these island communities are being denied the very resources, such as lagoons and uninhabited islands, that they depend on for everyday economic development activities. There has been conflict between tourist resorts and island communities (such as fishermen, guesthouses, farmers and women engaged in various traditional activities) with regard to the issue of access to resources which have been available to the island communities in the past. It is also important to highlight that these aforementioned issues have not been discussed widely by the

major stakeholders or by the island communities or scholars. Furthermore, the UNESCO and Government of Maldives' declaration of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve provided an opportunity to integrate local communities' needs and concerns with tourism as one among the many sectors and stakeholders, on issues faced within these atoll communities. But I argue that the processes and policy environment under which it took place did not give the local communities the intended benefits. Therefore, the aim of this section is to discuss the issues in detail and highlight how they further restrict economic development activities that have been transformed, as discussed in the above section.

8.3.1 Impact on fishermen, and issues of safety, privacy for tourism, and conflicts

Transformation due to tourism, as discussed in the previous section, has to be assessed in the context of what the community gained and lost as a result of these transformations. Not every community member agrees that tourism, while transforming the fisheries sector, brought benefits to the community.

A senior island official from Baa Atoll questioned the very essence of the said transformation.

You see, our community is not purely based on tourism. Isn't it? Our fisherman doesn't have access to their lagoons; neither does farmers to their farming islands. To make it even more complicated, they can't easily sell their produce to close-by resort. These issues will negatively impact fishermen and other people. If fishermen can't catch bait, how can they catch fish? So, our loss is very clear here. (Respondent 42)

The island official argued that the community is largely independent of tourism for its livelihood activities except for the reef fish it supplies. More importantly, the official argued that traditional fishing practices and farmers have been negatively impacted by tourism.

Many of the local fishermen on the three atolls agree with the island official's claim that fishing is now dependent on tourism itself, but at the same time access to their fishing grounds has been denied, which puts restrictions to their activities:

But with the lagoons attached to these islands going to resorts and they are developing rooms and other activities, we have no place to fish. Our livelihood is lost. We need to find a solution. But yes, our income is now dependent on resorts too. (Respondent 56)

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Likewise, fishermen from Baa Atoll and Kaafu Atoll concur with the said negative impact of tourism on their fishing practices. This does not negate the benefits that tourism generates to local communities in terms of employment of youth in particular. But it provides an opportunity to weigh up both the negative and positive impacts of tourism in terms of its economic development opportunities. In this respect, one fisherman from Kudarikilu Island, who has moved from tuna fishing to reef fishing, describes how they see this transformation from both perspectives. Adding to the concerns of fishermen, an island official stated that fishing was increasingly restricted due to the manner in which expansion of tourism is taking place without considering community needs and concerns. Reflecting on that, he stated:

Recently also they [MOT] gave Veyofushi Island [in Baa Atoll]. The lagoon surround that island use to be a lagoon our community shared for bait and reef fishing. But that's now blocked. There is nothing we can do now. Similarly, we hear that the same resort owner wants the sand bank and close-by area to develop water bungalows for his resort. And I hear they are willing to pay US\$1 million for it. (Respondent 42)

While the tourism sector dominates in national policy making and excludes local communities from decision making, it is important to note the sense of helplessness here, as expressed by the island councillor, as the enclosure and appropriation of lagoons is happening rapidly and affects the livelihood of fishermen more than ever.

One fisherman argued that while fishing is the primary livelihood activity of their community, tourism is also an important source of employment, especially for youth, although fishermen generate more money than from the resorts. He stated that:

The issue is our island has around four large fishing boats, we normally bring on average MVR 500K to 600k per month to the island, depending on the season...We have 30 to 35 youth working in resorts close by. They also generate a good income to our island. But we bring almost ten times what they bring from fishing. (Respondent 56)

Confirming the issue of enclosure and appropriation of lagoons by the tourism sector from their traditional users, the local communities, a former Atoll Chief highlighted the manner in which these boundaries have been drawn/constructed artificially by policy makers, by only considering the needs of tourism. This causes conflicts between local communities and tourist

resorts. These have led to hostile relationships and conflict which have not, to this date, been addressed in an inclusive manner. For example, one such hostile and conflict situation was addressed by one of the resort managers from Baa Atoll, highlighting the critical levels of safety, and the presence of conflict:

Government has allocated us a boundary. But we find regularly local reef fishers coming and fishing here. For example, it very common for these people to come and fish side by our Water bungalow. They come in small boats in the night without lights. Recently also we experience this issue, one of our tourist night fishing boats nearly missed one of these fishers within our boundary in the night. We could have had a serious accident that night. We face such situations. We have tried many times to talk to them, explaining that is prohibited to enter our resort boundary. They then argue with us and say, this is not good...how can you guys stop us? But then it's our boundary. Even though this boundary is created artificially, it still is our boundary. Isn't it? If they bait fish or do any other activity outside our boundary, we will not stop them. We will not interfere...But they can't do it within this boundary. Mostly we can't stop them physically since it's not allowed by law. They sometime do lobster fishing using lights, but we can't stop them. If we try to talk to them, they verbally abuse us. We also find it difficult to report such cases as often they come in unregistered boats or boats with the registered number covered up. We can't make a formal complaint with proof. Sometimes when we report, police will come and check the situation and chase them out of our boundary. (Respondent 29)

In addition to the issue of safety, issues of privacy have also arisen a number of times: *See again it comes with a privacy point. We often get calls our water villas. Guests are saying there's a fishing boat fishing right in front of our room, and they want their money back and leave immediately. (Respondent 31)*

First, this confirms that there is an on-going conflict between tourist resorts and fishermen that stems back to the process of enclosure and appropriation. Second, these hostile relationships not only put the fishermen at a disadvantage, but also put tourism at risk by harming their product image and also by exploiting negative tourism.

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While such issues of on-going conflict are tied to the problem of denied access to the fishermen's natural resources, one HR resort manager, who belongs to the atoll community, and who has worked in the industry since 1985, takes a more sympathetic point of view towards the local fishermen. He believes that the local communities need to be consulted before decisions to transform uninhabited islands to resorts are made (Respondent 31).

This resort manager's view comes from his sense of belonging to the community. He highlighted the core issue as "the way current regulations come, these communities have no choice." Often resorts operate in total isolation, both geographically and policy-wise. Therefore, a policy-level environment and space to garner "mutually beneficial" relationships do not exist. While there is lack of consultation and shared links with the local communities in policy decisions, the artificial boundaries that are drawn in this process of power and on-going conflicts do not address issues faced by the tourism sector, nor do they make local communities the primary recipients of the benefits of tourism, as tourism literature often claims. Therefore, to seek a solution, local communities need to be consulted and a clear understanding of resource usage and its shared links needs to be factored into decision-making processes.

However, the Dharavandhoo Island council official believes that there is no easy solution to this issue. According to him, the resort wants the maximum ownership of areas for snorkelling and diving, hindering the fishermen's activities and also preventing similar activities for their local guesthouses. It is a situation where three specific interest groups are contesting the same resource. But at present, the tourism sector, more specifically resort owners, is more powerful in obtaining exclusive rights over these resources due to the process of enclosure and appropriation.

While fishermen that I interviewed were ready to address the issue of damaging the reefs and other concerns of tourist resorts such as privacy issues, they suggest that proper regulations need to be enforced regarding bait fishing in the bigger lagoon areas near their islands, so that there is no damage to the reef (Respondent 56). They further stated that policies, including tourism regulations and amendments to laws, need to be established after proper consultations with all stakeholders inclusively while taking the needs and considerations of the local community members into account.

8.3.2 Impact on guesthouse tourism

Similarly, other economic development activities that are linked to tourism, such as the operation of diving schools and guesthouses by local communities, are argued to be severely restricted by the boundary regulation and lagoon allocation decisions of MOT without proper consultation and consideration of local communities, as evident from some of the issues addressed by island councillors:

Local tourism through these guesthouses is also restricted in my opinion. What happens when a tourist comes to a guesthouse they take them to sand bank for a picnic or for night fishing. But all these places are now allocated to a resort and they tell guesthouses to move out of these areas. (Respondent 42)

8.3.3 Establishment of Biosphere Reserve in Baa Atoll

UNESCO's declaration of Baa Atoll as a Biosphere Reserve, in June 2011, was an excellent opportunity to provide a voice to the local communities and at the same time a common platform to allow participation at a broader level, including diverse segments of the local community, to discuss and address the issues highlighted by fishermen, farmers and other stakeholders within the local community, in particular as discussed above. Sharing his experience in working with local communities as a Biosphere Reserve coordinator, an official who worked there since its establishment noted that:

Biosphere Reserves is not all about protecting and not allowing communities to use their resources. But to manage these resources in a sustainable way. The local communities can use the buffer zone for their activities. We have core area (which is red zone) where catching bait using traditional method is allowed but not fishing. This area is the most sensitive area as this is the area where all the protected species comes every then and now. So here taking or touching anything is banned. But in the next area which is yellow zone, fishing and bait fishing is allowed but in the traditional way only. (Respondent 59)

However, fishermen contest this view by arguing that the manner in which the Biosphere Reserve was established constructed additional restrictions for the local fisherman; while tourist resorts acquire neighbouring uninhabited islands, lagoons, and sandbanks, according to these fishermen, Biosphere Reserve came and allocated lagoons mostly used by them for bait

fishing and reef fishing without adequately consulting them. (Respondent 56). These fishermen's concerns were contested by a Biosphere Reserve official:

No, I think it was a big misunderstanding with fishermen. Fishing from this reef is not totally banned. This use to be a primary or core area for them to catch bait fish. But what was banned was catching bait fish while anchoring the boat on the reef and diving fishing, which damages the reef considerably. Traditionally they use to catch bait fish without anchoring. So now also they can continue doing same. But can't do reef fishing. They can't do anything on the core area. We had several conflict issues from 2011 to 2013. In 2014 we only got three issues registered and that too fishermen not from this Atoll. We do find issue with tourist who visit here who goes and touching reef and species. There are guidelines and there has to be guide who takes tourist to these sites and each guide can only take 10 maximum on trip. (Respondent 59)

As discussed in the previous section, fishing in the Baa Atoll, in particular, has transformed from tuna fishing to reef fishing. The decision to allocate core areas exclusively for bait fishing using traditional methods is questioned by fishermen, given this transformation. The fishing community interviewed in Baa Atoll saw this as a “inconsiderate act” and “unjust,” as their voices were not heard during the consultation process, which was said to have been conducted by officials at the inception of Biosphere Reserve establishment. These fishermen also saw the Biosphere Reserve as no better, as it also restricted them from using the lagoons.

We told them [Atoll council and other authorities] during Biosphere Reserve discussions... when you restrict these lagoons as protected areas we will face further challenges as we are using them for fishing. Our fishing has changed to reef fishing over the years and we need some areas for reef fishing activities. Now we have to travel to Raa Atoll. Most of us now fish from Raa Atoll. For us this simply is another area that is out of bound, just like areas surrounding tourist resorts lagoons. (Respondent 56)

On a similar note, a consultant who was engaged in the process said:

I have seen the frustrations by the fishermen, and they wanted to protect, let's say Hanifaru Bay. And fishermen were saying that tourism was getting all the preferences. And I guess because of our historic way of having public consultation or stakeholder

engagements, from my experience, a lot of the public don't trust this consultation process. (Respondent 34)

Similarly, an island councillor from Baa Atoll involved in the discussion and in the committee shared his experience during the process of allocating lagoons for the Biosphere Reserve:

another issue is, I find resorts' voice is much stronger in Biosphere Reserve. Since they have formed BAARU [Baa Atoll Resorts United, a collaborative platform formed between Baa Atoll resorts], they work together to protect their interest. At the same time government is usually seen taking their side. I suspect that how they manage keep the fishermen's concerns out. (Respondent 42)

It is clear and evident that the stakeholders were not transparent and lacked communication with the local communities around the transformation of natural resources, particularly in accepting that these communities are heterogeneous and concerns from each segment of the community needed to be addressed. In addition, these concerns were voiced to the government and other stakeholders, but fishermen and consultants engaged in the process argue that the Biosphere Reserve gave preference to the tourism sector in the allocation of the natural resources within their boundaries, over the needs and concerns of the local island communities. It is also interesting to find that all the Baa Atoll resorts collectively formed a collaborative platform to protect their interests in the process. The Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve case illustrates a one-off process within which both tourism and local communities were engaged to decide on the allocation of resources to competing interests. It is important to highlight decisions taken regarding Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve that had its impact on the local communities, particularly fishermen and guesthouses. The result of the process demonstrated the power of the tourism sector over the policy-making processes and further denied access to lagoons surrounding these communities.

8.3.4 Island and lagoon appropriation

Data from the local community interviews revealed that, similar to the discussion above as regards lagoons, the increasing allocation of uninhabited islands for tourist resorts or virgin islands under the care of resorts, affects several economic development activities that are independent of tourism but closely linked to tourism. Local communities have a close link with the uninhabited islands, which are often leased from the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture

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at a central level, where a number of major activities are carried out for their survival: farming, thatch making and traditional medicinal purposes and recreation. Unlike lagoons, the uninhabited islands are clearly allocated under the *vaaruva* title or for tourism purposes by the central government as discussed in Chapter 5. Few islands are kept under the care of the atoll or island office as virgin islands where any kind of permanent activity is prohibited.

The process and current rapid conversion of uninhabited islands to tourist resorts, I argue, leaves the local communities not only at risk of losing the natural resources that their economic development activities depend on, but also at risk of alienation from solutions that the tourism sector has been working on to deal with environmental challenges. These allocation decisions, whether linked to tourism or not, have direct and indirect effects on the well-being of these communities. If we are to truly forge a collaborative solution to environmental challenges faced by both local communities and tourist resorts, we would need to give local communities a sense of ownership of its surrounding resources and also allow them to participate in this decision making on a more equitable basis.

One of the farmers from Gaafu Alif narrated the following, illustrating the disconnect, and discontentment felt, and the community view of tourism as “them versus us.”

Nobody is consulted before an island is allocated. Look, we are deeply concern the way such decisions are made. We have no idea how and to whom these islands are allocated. Recently we found that resort developer and constructor got many uninhabited islands including Maamutaa Island close to this island which were used by our community for different purposes, including farming activities. But he has started his construction work. And now we cannot go these islands. (Respondent 68)

Although tourism was introduced to Gaafu Alif Atoll quite recently, the situation of Gaafu Alif Atoll is no different from Kaafu Atoll and Baa Atoll in terms of denied access to uninhabited islands and its allocation to powerful tourism players as tourism expands to outer atolls. Such allocation of islands for tourism from Male’ has devastating consequences for local communities, particularly farmers and other users within the local community, leaving them with an immense loss.

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As discussed in Section 8.2.4, women are mostly found working on the island in farming or in thatch making, other activities that are linked to these uninhabited islands. Thatch making needs raw materials, mostly from uninhabited islands or islands allocated for farming where lots of coconut trees are found. Thus data revealed that their economic development activities narrowed and were restricted due to access to these islands being denied. In addition, as stated above, loss of access is also a loss for traditional medicine women practitioners who have faced both negative and positive consequences with the opportunities that have opened with tourism.

Ingredients for some of my traditional medicines, I collect from uninhabited islands. Some resorts also have that in their untouched areas. But they don't allow to collect it. Specially the medicine I prepare for arthritis, I go to Gemendhoo island to collect "kandholu." So, when all islands are taken for tourism that will be very difficult for me. So let's hope, we could keep islands like Gemendhoo for community use. Then we can balance the needs of community and also resorts. But now it's only what they need.

(Respondent 53)

Apart from the loss of these uninhabited islands for the economic activities of the locals, the other concern was for the loss of their leisure, or picnic islands. A community member expresses his dissatisfaction with the current process:

Baa Atoll people are disadvantaged ...we have no island that we could take family for a picnic and enjoy sea and beach. All our uninhabited islands are leased to tourism or other uses. If there is a sand bank close by, it's also lease to a resort close by. So it's nearly impossible for locals to enjoy our natural islands. Even to get coconuts and its leaves it's becoming more difficult. Then again, we have to depend on these resorts.

(Respondent 44)

8.4 Summary of the Chapter

Tourism has gradually transformed the economic development activities of these communities. These transformations have brought short-term benefits to the communities in terms of employment opportunities, supply of local products and expansion of the reef-fishing industry. Over the years they have been denied access to their traditionally used natural resources for their livelihood and recreations. This has brought about conflicts between tourist resorts and different users of natural resources such as fishermen, guesthouse operators and farmers, as

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illustrated in the chapter. Most island communities lack basic infrastructure that is important for day-to-day living such as safe water, sewerage, banking and transportation etc. The absence of infrastructure has also further hindered their potential to reap economic development opportunities that arise from close-by tourist resorts. Tourist resort owners and management have an edge within this network of power relationships as local communities have to ask for basic services for their survival on to day-to-day basis, ranging from transportation within the atoll and to Male', to water supply and waste management.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The thesis has focused attention on how Maldives communities experience the tourism development process. It describes an experience of marginalisation, from both decision making and, in turn, the benefits of tourism. The cases explored in later chapters highlight the consequences for small, rural communities of a tourism development process dominated by central control and elite networks of power. There are issues in this respect to do with loss of access to place, resources and the cultural meanings associated with them. However, perhaps the most significant loss is that of the potential to build a sustainable and inclusive tourism for future generations. It is this loss of potential and with it the impetus to drive a democratisation agenda in the Maldives that has driven my commitment to this research. The research extends the tourism literature on the Maldives and SIDS more generally by focusing attention on the way that tourism is entangled in local and national politics.

This chapter reflects on what the island cases and the political and tourism planning histories of the Maldives tell us about how this potential might be better recognised and realised. The chapter begins by summarising the research findings and asks what can be learned from them about the nature of contemporary tourism development processes in the Maldives and SIDS more generally, and how these processes might be made more sustainable and inclusive. In particular, the discussion emphasises just how important it is in many SIDS to recognise the centrality of tourism in development processes; most notably, how it is tourism that binds together the networks of powerful actors that drive development policies. This has major implications for both environmental and social justice, and how governments and communities might respond to them. The chapter concludes by elaborating on the call for a more deliberative democratisation that utilises the potential of tourism to bind communities in the context of climate change, as well as provide jobs and growth.

9.2 Summary of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the production of tourism policy in the Maldives which has systematically marginalised and excluded local communities from economic development. The research asked how tourism development processes became embedded in the national

politics of democratisation, how these processes played out in small island tourism communities, and to what extent these communities were able to participate in or lead these processes. To answer these questions, I used document analysis, my own experience of working in the Maldives, and a qualitative case study approach with in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants on three atolls to trace tourism development processes over a period of 40 years and examine their impacts on a set of small communities.

The research demonstrated that tourism has been central to national political change and the wins and losses of the democratisation agenda that has animated national politics. It made the argument that over multiple decades tourism development has come to dominate economic development, social transformation, and the often-tumultuous processes of political change. It also outlined how tourism development in the Maldives came to be dominated by an elite group of state officials, national elites, politicians and foreign tourism capital, and pointed to some of the consequences. In particular, the research pointed to the experience of three small island tourism communities, illustrated how little voice they have had in tourism development in spite of the way that tourism has profoundly altered their lives, and explained how these communities have been marginalised by (and from) the gains made by others from tourism development. The research yielded three primary sets of findings.

My interest in this research arose from my personal experience as a technocrat and a senior policy maker during 12 years of service to the government of the Maldives. Previous research in this area provided a shallow understanding of the importance of historical development in the Maldives and the nature of tightly intertwined national and local island politics.

In short, the research finds that the production and implementation of tourism policies and processes has produced a systematic marginalisation and exclusion of local communities, largely as a consequence of an elite-based economic and political system. Tourism is currently central to development processes in the Maldives and has the potential to contribute, but only in a deliberative democratic framework for local community development. This has major implications for both environmental and social justice and how government and communities might respond to current and future challenges. Solutions need to be found in terms of disrupting the dominance of this elite system over local lives. Locally appropriate and

developed deliberative forms of democracy and associated institutions (as suggested in “inclusive tourism”) can be fashioned on the ground to empower local communities.

9.2.1 The persistence of pre-tourism era, power relations and elite-based tourism.

Power-relations in Maldives tourism development emerged out of what Saarinen and colleagues have called “distinct contextual and historical dimensions” (Saarinen et al., 2017, p. 307). Tourism planning was built around institutions designed by political leaders and industry pioneers to centralise control of industry development in their own hands. Tourism pioneers, authoritarian leaders, new technocratic development officials and related experts, and local entrepreneurs developed a laissez-faire economic approach to tourism under the auspices of the then the President of the Maldives. This model not only marginalised small communities from the tourism development process, but removed pre-existing autonomy and access to their natural resources such as lagoons and islands. Islands and lagoons were commodified to encourage foreign investment, alienating communities from common pool resources. A combination of economic hardship, authoritarian control, and a physical geography that encouraged a one-island-one-resort development model, saw the Maldives develop a centralised tourism development process that took control away from communities. The policy segregated what is an elite tourism experience from local communities and minimised interaction between locals and tourists. Secured and legitimated by reference to traditional society and religious identity, there was little resistance until early 2000; and the model persists today.

One of the consequences of marginalising and segregating small island communities has been that they have not shared fully in wealth and livelihood gains from tourism. Further, they have not benefitted from other positive dimensions of tourism such as the environmental regulations that are designed to offer up a high-quality, pristine tourism product. Commitments to the protection of lagoons and its marine species have not spilled over to these communities, resulting in the paradox that local communities must now be “educated” to deal with the climate change and other environmental impacts brought about by global tourism and its travel, cultural impacts, and dispossession of local community resources. Local workers and businesses have not benefitted to the extent that they should have, as elites have developed a sustainable tourism that excludes local communities. After more than 45 years of tourism, the

industry still remains tightly controlled by networks of national elites, state officials and domestic and international capital. The case clearly illustrates the point that “historically contingent processes often shape the present and future characteristics and power relations in tourism”, and in turn exemplifies “how tourism works with localities and localities with tourism” (Saarinen et al., 2017, p. 314). It is an important conclusion for thinking through development opportunities and models in other tourism-dependent SIDS.

9.2.2 Democracy, tourism planning and policy formulation

Tourism development research in the Maldives and other SIDS too often loses sight of the dominance of tourism on political life and its institutions, the centrality of tourism governance in development processes, and the impact of tourism on governance. Studies can take for granted the relationship between democratic processes and tourism development. Dominated by large businesses, commonly overseas owned, and central to national economies, development is often a question of tourism and powerful elite relationships tend to build up around that dependence. Further, as the Maldives case illustrates, many of the institutions of development were designed to support a fledgling tourism industry at a time when the concerns of local communities were downplayed or ignored. A mix of elite formation and community marginalisation has left smaller islands with little political space to participate in development processes that govern people’s lives, absorb their resources, and shape their environments. At the same time, planning preoccupation with tourism has closed down other economic development opportunities.

Significantly, however, as Maldives tourism development has gained momentum in recent years, it has opened up new possibilities for political change. From its early days, tourism provided a platform for political engagement. Tourism funded national development. New elites aligned with old around their shared interests in tourism development. In the democratisation period, many of the new entrants to tourism formed or joined new political parties. They found opportunities to capitalise on tourism as a political tool and put themselves on the frontline in this process. Tensions surfaced, such as increasing lease periods on resorts, and the appropriation of islands and lagoons, and resort workers’ demands for minimum wage and fair treatment at work surfaced. These tensions, however, ultimately went unresolved and the democratic experiment or “transition to democracy” only lasted for a brief period, from

late 2008 to February 2012. Tourism development has subsequently returned to business as usual behind closed doors. Government, MATI and the new resort-owning elites have once again taken control and seek to preserve the image of the Maldives as “paradise” and protect their investments. The pressures for change in tourism and the closing down of democratic momentum are not unrelated.

While local communities are threatened by tourism development policies and marginalised by the alliance of political and tourism elites, they nonetheless see tourism development as an opportunity for socio-economic, political and environmental gains. In this sense, tourist resorts are more than just negative agents of island and lagoon appropriation. They are catalysts for the tensions to do with labour rights, access to resources, and equal access to the utilities, infrastructure and services associated with development. My respondents in island communities seek the freedom to carve out their own development trajectory. Rather than simply complaining about the loss of livelihoods brought about by alienation from lagoons and uninhabited islands, my interview respondents emphasised the opportunities that might arise from resource ownership and collaboration with resorts to build sustainable development. This could only arise, they claimed, from restoring their access to their resources and the institutions that gave them decision-making roles.

Community members also saw many examples of environmentally and ecologically unsustainable practices, which they argue might be offset by more active community participation and the opportunity for communities to exercise an environmental stewardship. Several interview respondents claimed that tourism resorts had been expanding to occupy adjacent lagoons without any form of licence from, or negotiation with, local communities. They also emphasised that artificial structures such as water bungalows on the lagoon reefs were damaging the reef and its inhabitants. They saw these structures as symbolic of a tourism development process that was putting their futures at further risk at the same time as enriching resort owners and officials. There was little evidence of trickle down in the communities I visited.

These various tensions are beginning to crystallise around the emergence of guesthouses in local communities, which began during the democratic transition. This involvement with tourism has given local communities a taste for participation in the business of tourism and

invigorated their opposition to the loss of control over their land and lagoon resources. It has started to empower local communities with jobs and alternative livelihood opportunities. These openings into tourism are placing new pressure on the political legitimacy of tourism policy outcomes. They are only likely to intensify demands from communities to be treated with dignity, reasonableness, and equality, and to be included in the tourism policy processes and by default in development as a whole. Exclusion from tourism development has excluded these communities from development more generally as well as from the wider political process. These issues raise important questions about the sustainability of tourism development. They also raise the stakes tied up in the relationship between tourism development and the painful decade-long efforts to consolidate a democratic transition.

9.2.3 Participation in tourism development

Chapters 7 and 8 explored the nature and extent of community participation in tourism planning and community involvement in economic development respectively. Each of the three case studies of community engagement with tourism demonstrated that despite several decades of master planning, local communities are still unable to participate positively in what is a fundamentally top-down tourism development process. They are excluded from both participating in decision-making processes and sharing in the benefits of tourism development (Timothy, 1999, p. 372). Instead, both planning processes and spoils of development are dominated by tightly intertwined networks of tourism and political elites. There are real barriers to participation for local communities, and the conflicts between tourism and the local community are increasingly apparent. Local farmers, fishermen and women engaged in craft activities have limited opportunity to tap into tourist resorts to sell their produce. Furthermore, they are routinely denied access to the resources they require for these activities.

As more local entrepreneurs venture into guesthouse businesses and demand access to lagoons and nearby uninhabited islands, these frustrations are developing into the seeds of future conflict. The leasing of islands and lagoon space to tourist resort owners without consultation with local communities is immediately more controversial, especially as climate change places increasing pressure on land resources. These tensions are bound into wider and growing political tensions domestically, and may have serious implications for a tourism development

process already under stress from climate change. Questions of inclusivity and sustainability are increasingly bound together in potentially disruptive relations.

Guesthouses are the primary disruptive element. They represent the material form of an effective response from communities to marginalisation from tourism. Community-based entrepreneurs have used guesthouse tourism and the turn to ecotourism in the global tourism market, facilitated by new communications technologies, to engage much more directly in tourism activities. While facing significant challenges to gain access to basic infrastructure such as safe water and sanitation as well as their own natural resources, guesthouse tourism has allowed them to act independently to transform their livelihood opportunities and engage with development (Thompson-Carr, 2016). Guesthouses, however, clearly indicate the potential for a different tourism future for the Maldives: a future where local communities take a more central position and partnership with enclave resorts to share, protect and maintain the ecology surrounding these islands.

9.2.4 Moving forward

The Decentralization Act (7/2010) has opened up guesthouse opportunities, but there is some distance to go towards realising the potential of inclusive and sustainable tourism development. A number of changes are required to the way tourism futures are practised, policy is made and enacted. First, communities must be recognised as tourism partners and stakeholders alongside established resort operators, and new relations of trust must be fostered between communities and tourist resorts. Second, the policy-making environment will need to be opened up to a wider set of voices and concerns, including revisiting enclave-based tourism (Grönlund et al., 2015; Karpowitz et al., 2009). As Kothari and Arnall (2017) insist, this will mean challenging “the current prevailing tourist imaginary of pristine, unpeopled, deserted islands” (p. 995). Third, debates about development on smaller islands must also be opened up to the possibility of aquaculture or fishing that might be developed alongside tourism and reduce the grip it holds over thinking about the economy and island futures.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly tourism development in the Maldives needs to be democratised and participation widened and deepened. This must include giving existing institutions such as local councils the powers to control and manage community resources and contribute meaningfully to tourism planning. Little progress can be made without empowering

local communities “through their ownership or management of the natural resources that are utilised for purposes by or within their communities is an important goal of sustainable tourism development” (Thompson-Carr, 2016, p. 27). Progress, however, will also require the building of a new, more devolved set of governance institutions. These will need to facilitate wider and more intensive community participation and trusted relations, new engagements and effective information flows between policy makers, tourist resort and local communities.

Building on Kothari and Arnall (2017) observation about new imaginaries, one key place to start is to generate new narratives about the success of novel tourism initiatives and the failures of existing approaches. Narratives of community development initiatives centred on good governance and the possibilities of collective action or mutually beneficial opportunities from within the Maldives and further afield might resource new debates about inclusive, sustainable and deliberative democratic tourism and offer up alternative visions to those of resort enclaves. Significantly, this shift in thinking may also encourage a literature that recognises and emphasises the central interplay between tourism and democracy in countries where tourism is the central economic sector. It may drive debates on the ground in the Maldives as well as the literature to the possibility of deliberative democracy as a platform for sustainable, inclusive tourism development that takes climate change adaptation measures seriously. This study focuses on the interconnections among tourism development, small “rural” communities, and democracy and on how tourism can either intensify existing forms of marginalisation or offer up opportunities for an as yet unimagined sustainable tourism.

9.2.5 New knowledge

This research has provided a first critical account of the interplay of democratisation and tourism development in the Maldives. It forwards an argument for community-level deliberative democracy in the Maldives, that will inform bottom-up politics at an important time. The research has highlighted the foundation for sustainable future tourism that recognises both climate change and key political contests on the ground. The research also extends debates about sustainability in the Maldives into an interdisciplinary space. An important emphasis on ethics as well as politics in the making of local futures-inclusive tourism development was made in this research.

It has provided an extended review of the development of tourism policy in the country, which highlights the way in which tourism elites have become entangled in setting national development trajectories. The review identified three distinct phases of tourism development and teased out the processes of elite formation that have driven Maldives tourism and development more broadly through these phases. The review emphasised the way in which the democratisation agenda of the early 2000s was built around and ultimately undermined by questions of tourism. Each of these empirical contributions offers new insights into, and will inform scholarship on, national development in the Maldives and tourism development in the Maldives, as well as in SIDS more broadly. These insights include the way that tourism policy has shaped national development policy. Together, they will open up new reflections on scholarship addressing the centrality of tourism and tourism-based elite formation in SIDS.

The research on the marginalisation of local communities brought about by enclave tourism adds a new chapter to that work. The particular attention paid to the absence of participation and the alienation of communities from access to their natural resources, speaks to a wide literature on development. Again, it adds a new case to the global repertoire of accounts of dispossession and marginalisation. It also speaks to the particularities of the Maldives case where these forms of marginalisation are tightly bound up with a democratisation agenda that has failed to deal with the central challenge of turning over an enclave tourism to the communities in whose islands and lagoons it is based. The struggle to imagine, policy and implement a sustainable and inclusive tourism to replace a tourism dominated by elites and tied fundamentally to the interests of national and foreign capital is on-going. To date this struggle has remained largely peaceful, which also provides lessons for the world—yet the experiences of other places suggest that there is some urgency to finding a resolution.

The Maldives case once again highlights the risks of enclave-based tourism development to both environmental and social sustainability. Isolating tourism from communities does not insulate communities from its negative impacts. Rather, it draws boundaries that lock in systematic inequalities, prevent positive linkages, and sanction forms of practice that would benefit from community oversight. As Kothari and Arnall (2017) point out, it allows tourism operators to present idyllic images and environmental narratives of tourism that misrepresent its realities. Enclaves remove the scrutiny of tourism that might be exercised by local

communities and tourists alike. Images of isolation and a pristine environment suggest a careful and thoughtful social and environmental management that is at odds with environmental degradation and impoverished communities. This is not to suggest that tourism development be restricted or outlawed, but that it needs to be made more honest and forced to confront its contradictions and find ways to overcome these and build a more inclusive, transparent and sustainable tourism.

The research insists that environmental and social justice are intricately entangled, and they both require a supportive political architecture. The political order in the Maldives is not only designed to produce a centrally planned, top-down development process, but it is reinforced by that process. The two are mutually constitutive and work to reproduce the pre-existing marginalisation of local communities and to explicitly disconnect them from their natural resources. This is far from helpful in a context where a SIDS is trying on the one hand to develop a sustainable tourism development and on the other to transition from authoritarian governance to democracy. In such contexts, commitments to deliberative democracy promise to disrupt the level of central control and its exercise through processes of elite formation and reproduction. Deepening democracy into tourism development by instituting inclusive, reasonable and egalitarian practices would test commitments to a democratic transition and arguably redirect tourism development towards sustainability.

9.3 Limitations of the Research Methodology

The research was conducted in the context of political unrest marked by a widening sense of fear and intimidation. A member of parliament, two journalists and several civilian others were murdered. Public officials who spoke out against corruption and authoritarianism, such as the Auditor General and the Prosecutor General, were dismissed from office illegally and under coercion. In this context, several potential interviewees were reluctant to speak openly about tourism development policies, which restricted my access to key insights and in turn the potential richness of my account. However, while this meant I was unable to support my arguments with the level of detail I would ideally like to have provided, it did not mean that the research was unable to gain insights into broader processes. Indeed, even if officials were more open in their responses to questions, using the material would have posed deep ethical dilemmas given the underlying authoritarianism of national politics. As it stands, the thesis

holds back on many of the details of policy formation processes and events in the atoll communities so as to protect informants and direct the research to positive calls for deliberative democracy and away from direct criticism of particular actors. This is very much the political purpose of the research and in turn underlines the methodology adopted.

The research was also restricted by the absence of a key set of perspectives, most notably those of international agencies (in the Maldives and abroad). These agencies are crucial actors in tourism development, and are often the funders of initiatives and/or mediators of relations between local elites and foreign capital. They have a potentially significant role to play if guiding a democratic transition and designing new more inclusive and deliberative institutions. In a context where political change may eventually be driven by climate change adaptation measures and the flows of international aid and investment capital associated with them, these agencies may potentially bring to bear on resort owners and public officials the pressure necessary to drive change. Ultimately, the context of political unrest as well as the logistical challenges of organising research with both public officials and atoll communities prevented me from interviewing international agencies. While again this restricted the thesis in some important ways, it did not interfere with the ability to identify the nature of elite formation and the directions and mechanisms of top-down control, or the conflicts between local experience and planning regimes around enclave tourism.

The research also faced a set of more general and more specific challenges. In general terms, the absence of experiments in simultaneously deliberative, inclusive and sustainable tourism development has meant that empirical work has focused on their absence as opposed to evaluating what might or might work in practice. This is a limitation that might be addressed by future research. In terms of detail in the field, my background knowledge of much of the material considered gave me significant advantages in data collection. However, this does mean that the interviews were inevitably read through pre-formed lenses and an already situated politics of knowledge production. This is an inevitable consequence of deeply engaged forms of response, but does mean that the research cannot claim an independent objectivity. The semi-structured interviews with community actors were conducted largely in the local language (Dhivehi), which I then translated into English, potentially inscribing a deeper

researcher bias. To counter this potential problem, I was careful in re-reading the Dhivehi transcripts and English translation many times before using them.

9.4 Future Research

The study provides ample evidence that local communities are on the losing end of a tourism development process that is tilted towards tourist resort owners and central policy makers who are tightly networked and often one and the same people. Not surprisingly, the process has generated multiple layers of socio-political, economic and environmental injustice. While this thesis has focused on governance processes, there are other spheres of systematic community formation and transformation that might be considered in greater depth, especially with respect to the next challenge of designing deliberative institutions. Cultural practice is one sphere where further research might be developed. So too is religion, in a context where changes in the structure of tourism are being considered and religion may become mobilised as a tool in the politics of change. After all, tourism in all parts of the world has been long seen as disruptive of cultural practice and traditionalist ideology and its politics, with religion understood as very much at odds with tourism development.

Future research needs to monitor the interplay between religion, traditionalism and tourism development processes in the Maldives, while any effective deliberative democracy will need to build-in religious voices and institutions. However, in an immediate sense it has yet to be formative of the tensions that I describe in this thesis. In a comparative analysis of tourism development on two islands in the Maldives, Shakeela and Weaver (2018a) found that the persistence of traditional religious beliefs on one of the two islands positioned “tourism’s acceleration as a potential threat” (p. 21). They suggest that on this traditionalist island, which is isolated from tourism, tourism was considered “an ‘evil’ from which their community should be insulated” (p. 13), whereas on the second island, which had strong connections to tourism, it was considered a “‘managed evil’” (p. 21). Yet my research findings do not support an extension of this observation to any claim that Islam is structuring the direction of tourism development, either as an active force or a potential barrier. I think it misleading to describe tourism in the Maldives as structured into an “emergent ‘Islamic pleasure periphery’ where attendant social exchanges are mediated by deeply held faith-based social representations as well as economic pragmatism” (p. 14). Rather, religion is more of an important background

presence, even if it is used to legitimate enclave tourism. Religion plays a more superficial role in both the everyday life of a Maldivian citizen and the functioning of the state than is often imagined by outside commentators. While it is clearly layered through any process, such as tourism, that ties social, political, and economic spheres into transformative relations, significant debates have yet to be premised upon religious concerns or driven by a politics of religion. Moreover, the relations between tourism and religion, and the potential politics of these relations, have been largely directed and suppressed by tourism elites and are overdetermined by their economic and political interests in enclave-based tourism development.

From the inception of tourism, the state has given various exemptions for the sector to thrive and grow. Religious considerations, for example, prevent the sale of alcohol on inhabited local islands, but tourism resorts are allowed to sell alcohol to tourists. Locals are content to accept activities that contradict the teachings of Islam as long as it is not happening on their own island. In 2010, local communities challenged the proposed shift in tourism policy to allow the sale of alcohol in guesthouses and hotels on inhabited islands, which led the government to back down. Some community interviewees claimed that this was as much to do with pressure from resort owners to undermine the decision to allow guesthouse tourism. Tensions between tourism and Islam are inevitable in the Maldives, as is the politics that will seek to manipulate these tensions. The successful spread (or otherwise) of guesthouse tourism will put this to the test, and needs to be followed by researchers as do the shifting relations between Islam and tourism. Any shift towards inclusive or sustainable tourism will need to manage both the real tensions and the potential politics that they will open up. Once again, deliberative processes are perhaps the best tool we have to alleviate, mediate and resolve any tensions.

This research has highlighted the long-standing conflicts that have arisen due to the appropriation and dispossession of uninhabited islands and lagoons by tourist resorts. Fishermen, farmers and other traditional users of these resources have been marginalised from voicing their concerns and disagreements through various political, social and economic power of tourist resort owners and policy makers. My research does not get as close to the ecological concerns that are beginning to shape marginalised experiences than I had ideally imagined. The contrasting ecological and environmental impacts and implications of guesthouse and

enclave centred tourism might open up an interesting research direction that will inform future sustainable tourism development in the Maldives and other SIDS.

A final area that warrants further investigation is the question of situated knowledge production and its potential. My positionality generated a range of opportunities and challenges. Future reflective study on situated, critical tourism research conducted by local researchers might make a valuable contribution to tourism development research. This is especially the case as the wider social science literature looks to decolonise knowledge production and develop “non-Western-centric epistemology.” I’m left asking what that looks like in relation to what Zhu and colleagues suggests might emerge as a “social science of Asian tourism development” (Zhu, Tucker, & Duncan, 2018, p. 154).

9.5 Final Reflections

The central argument put forward in this study is that tourism development policies must consider the historical construction of socio-political structures and power-relations, in particular how the pre-tourism era and contemporary structures interact. Fundamental to this is the practical question of how local communities participate in decision making, whether they are permitted or resourced to participate effectively, and the extent to which this may be shaping the way they benefit (or not) from tourism development. I argue that underlying barriers such as lack of trust (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2017) and the absence of “shared intentions” (O’Flynn, 2017, p. 187), require a reconceptualisation of inclusive tourism development that insists in the first instance on the establishment of institutions that secure a deliberative form of democratic governance, which I suggest is a precondition to inclusive and sustainable tourism. In a related sense, I also argue that a better understanding, in political ecology terms, of the relationship between the socio-political realm and the environmental impacts of tourism is a precondition to sustainable tourism. The questions of environmental justice and social justice are bound together in the question of local community resource sovereignty and the potential of local people to make improved and sustainable livelihoods from tourism in place. It is, of course, insufficient to measure the sustainability of tourism development simply by observing the so called “environmentally friendly activities” of tourist resorts. There can be no inclusivity, sustainability or justice in the context of on-going marginalisation of people from their means of island-based economic and social reproduction. In short, a sustainable, inclusive

tourism development is required, but awaits interventions that allow communities to participate meaningfully in both in decision making and economic development opportunities.

This, I suggest, requires institutions that offer to provide deliberative democratic spaces for local communities, where trust, shared intentions, and co-learning are fostered, and through which local peoples can direct local futures. Local communities and the tourism industry have potentially co-beneficial futures, but building enclave-based tourism creates separations and hierarchies where they are unhelpful. The solution is not rejection of tourism development, but instead, forging a collaborative future between the different stakeholders. Addressing the power relations at play and acknowledging the marginalised position of local communities is crucial for any such future in which local communities can take part in tourism development decisions.

Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) have recently floated the concept of inclusive tourism development as “transformative tourism in which marginalised groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits” (p. 4). They build on the observation of critics like Lawson (2010) who insist that tourism development must be about “an ethical concern for people and care, not just growth” (p. 359). In this way, they argue that a more critical and constructive approach to tourism would “lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes” (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018, p. 2). Concerns with ethics and care must fundamentally be about the interplay of activities and social understandings that are embedded in place as well as nation building and questions of wider social and economic development. If tourism development in the Maldives is to translate into sustainable and inclusive tourism development, it needs to address not just how tourism policies are formulated at a national scale, but how local communities participate and how they are empowered to work with their resources and places to build better livelihoods and futures of their own determining. From this literature-based perspective as well, then, the future of tourism development in the Maldives must attend to deliberative democracy if tourism is to make a difference.

To end, I reflect briefly on what this might look like. The first answer must be that at a national level, control over policy must look very different to the authoritarian and highly centralised governance that has been embedded in the Maldives. Transitioning to an inclusive tourism at

the local level must take place in the context of transitioning to a democratic society more broadly. At the local scale, an inclusive tourism development would begin by recognising that local communities are far from homogeneous, and would find better language to deal with this, than referring to “the community” or “local communities” as I have done in this research. This will immediately open up more deliberative spaces. If we view communities as composed of fishermen, farmers, young people, elderly, men, women, professionals, small business people and so on, we can begin to imagine the groups for whom voice needs to be found and given form. It leads us to think of what that form might look like, in what settings those voices might be brought together, and what social practices might help build the trust and sense of shared fates and futures required to build shared views about resource allocation, for example. What exactly these institutions might look like will need to be determined at a local level, but at a minimum, they should create and resource civil forums to encourage disempowered groups to “deliberate in their own enclaves (interest groups, parties, and movements) before entering the broader public sphere” (Karpowitz et al., 2009, p. 576). The decision-making powers will need to be turned over to community-level forums. What we can be sure of is that an enclave tourism that owes its existence and legitimacy to an authoritarian governance and is controlled from Male’ via centralised policy making, does not offer this kind of solution.

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