

**TOURISM & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
KATHMANDU, 16-18<sup>th</sup> MAY 2018**

**Carl Cater  
Swansea University, Wales, UK**

**Conference Report**

Scholars and practitioners gathered for the 9th International Conference on Tourism and Sustainable Development conference in Kathmandu between 16th and 18th May, 2018, following a very successful conference in the same location in 2017. Over 70 contributors from all over the world presented over 50 papers and keynotes covering many issues regarding the interface between tourism and its contribution to development. As Professor David Simmons, University of Lincoln, noted, these issues were particularly pertinent this year after the release of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the designation of 2017 as the International Year of Tourism for Sustainable Development by the UNWTO (World Tourism Organisation, 2018). While all the SDGs have some relevance to tourism, Goal 8 (the promotion of sustained, inclusive and economic growth) and Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns) alongside sustainable use of the environment (Goals 14 and 15) have been identified as being of specific focus for tourism planners and managers. Of course tourism development is not without its many problems, including a legacy of impacts and exploitation, highlighted by Dr Wendy Sealy in her expose of dependency and foreign domination in Caribbean tourism.

Whilst we were able to learn from international scholars, there were also many excellent papers from Nepalese colleagues, examining the issues and future potential for tourism development in a country which is still struggling with the impacts of the huge 2015 earthquake and political turmoil in recent years. The best paper award was sponsored by CABI publishers, with a copy of the Encyclopaedia of Sustainable Tourism (Cater, Garrod and Low, 2015). This award was presented to Prateek Gurung who presented a paper on Tourism Impact in Indigenous Bote Community of Chitwan National Park. Prateek used mixed methods to examine the perspectives of an indigenous community on tourism development. In common with previous research he found issues of dependency and control, with limited current benefits actually accruing to the host populations.

There was a particular focus on adventure tourism research this year, following the keynote by Professor Ghazali Musa from University of Malaya. Indeed Nepal is arguably the home of adventure tourism, pioneering the concept of both high altitude mountaineering (Musa, Carr and Higham, 2015) and trekking, as well as being host to many other adventure pursuits such as whitewater rafting, mountain biking and paragliding. There was therefore a sense of adventure tourism 'coming home', as Nepal has great opportunities to "develop adventure tourism products as a way of diversifying the tourism offering" (Cater, 2018). In parallel there will be increased research capacity, as Professor Ramesh Kunwar announced the forthcoming peer reviewed journal of Adventure Tourism to be published in 2019. Importantly, however, Professor Musa emphasised that we need to make sure that adventure tourists are also spiritually aware so that they care for the environments and cultures that they visit. This seems appropriate in a region which has both seen the birth of so many religions and also fostered the spiritual connection to mountain landscapes that is a strong contemporary tourism desire.

## References

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**Corresponding Author:** Associate Professor Carl Cater, Swansea University, Wales, UK.  
Email: [Carl.Cater@Swansea.ac.uk](mailto:Carl.Cater@Swansea.ac.uk)