

# 12

## Social Impacts – Conflict over Place Change

**By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:**

- Describe Doxey's Irridex
- Evaluate Budowski's relationships between tourism and the environment
- Analyse how impacts are caused by place change
- Understand how conflict theory underlies early attempts to assess social and environmental impacts of tourism.

### Introduction

Concerns about unsustainable tourism practices have been a subject of academic inquiry since the earliest days of tourism scholarship (Butler, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020). Indeed, it seems that a majority of the papers published in the first editions of *Annals of Tourism Research* documented adverse social and cultural impacts of tourism. Since then, a range of topics has emerged with the sophistication of the research evolving as our understanding of the causes of impacts and possible mitigation strategies have matured. Yet, to a large extent, many of the critical issues remain unresolved, in spite of the emergence of sustainable tourism as a dominant paradigm. Indeed, many of the issues have re-emerged under the guise of overtourism (Tokarchuk et al., 2022; Wall, 2020) as if it were a new issue, instead of an age-old problem associated with the numbers of tourists overloading a destination and compromising residents' quality of life (Butler, 2018).

Hundreds, if not thousands of academic papers have been published examining the impacts of tourism on host communities (Nunkoo et al., 2013; Hadinejad et al., 2019). Deery, Jago, and Fredline (2012: 65), though, note that much of this work is derivative, leading them to conclude “*research into the social impacts of tourism appears to be in a state of ‘arrested development,’ [where] there is a sense that the advances in understanding the impacts of tourists on host communities is incremental at best, or potentially circular.*” The reasons are manifold. Far too much of this research is descriptive in nature, and is typified by a ‘fill in the blank study – Understanding social impacts/ community attitudes of tourism in [name of destination \_\_\_\_\_].’ Many papers as well use the same metrics to measure attitudes, and therefore, unsurprisingly, come to the same conclusions. A third issue is that much of this research is of the self-fulfilling prophecy kind, where if one structures the study to look for adverse impacts, they can be found. A fourth and more critical issue is the lack of an agreed upon theoretical underpinning for most of the research, something identified by Ap (1990) 30 years ago that still resonates today.

This chapter explores some of the challenges in the conceptual discussion of tourism impacts. It begins with quest for theory and then reviews the foundational models by Doxey (1975) and Budowski (1976) and then explores the idea that the causes of impacts are a function of place change.

## Impact research - A quest for a unifying ‘theory’

Woosnam and Ribeiro (2023) building Deery et al.’s (2012) work identified five stages in the development of social impact research. The first stage began with the identification of definitions and parameters of the debate. It occurred in the 1970s. Shortly thereafter, incipient models were developed, with Doxey’s (1975) and Budowski’s (1976) models discussed here being the two most commonly cited ones. Stage three then looked at ways to operationalise these models, with Ap and Crompton’s (1998) work being among the most respected studies, for it developed rigorous questionnaires and study methods. The fourth stage represented instrument refinement. The fifth stage builds on previous work by developing even greater and more sophisticated theoretical model development and testing.

Three issues confront social impact research. The first is that there is no such thing as a single community, when one measures community attitudes. Instead, geographic spaces are comprised of multiple communities that react to tourism in different ways. Some may feel they benefit from tourism, others are adversely affected, others still feel tourism has no impact and others yet have a complicated relationship, seeing both benefits and costs. This observation leads to the second point in that impacts are not absolute. Instead, they are perceptual and reflected by attitudes or changes in attitudes (Gu & Ryan, 2008). The third issue relates to what