

# Relocation and *Décroissance* in Tourism Development

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## 1. Introduction

In 2016, the number of overseas tourists traveling between countries reached 1.3 billion. That number was about 700 million in 2002, and it has doubled in just 15 years (UNWTO, 2017, p.2). This rapid increase of tourists started in the 1950s has pushed the tourism industry to a national project for each country. For so-called developed countries, the tourism industry is a means to earn foreign currency. For developing countries, it has been hoped that the tourism development accelerates improvement of infrastructures, provides an opportunity to attract investment from around the world and drives economic growth. However, these projects have not been always successful. It is because tourism development at times produces economic disparity and labor exploitation, causes cultural change and has had a great impact on the natural environment. These issues have led to a discussion of tourism sustainability, and many people now fear the future of the tourism industry (Moutinho & Vargas-Sanchez, 2018, pp.218-219).

In this paper, based on these issues, we will apply Relph's argument and consider tourist sites as place colored by culture, society and nature, and study the change in meaning of place by tourism development (Relph, 1976). In addition, with the keyword "locality" created by place, we will seek a viewpoint on the tourism sustainability from the concept of "localism" in Latouche's concept of *décroissance* (Latouche, 2004). Tourism development is closely linked to modern Western values. We would like to reconsider this value by using the concept of place to learn how tourism events out to be in thought of *décroissance*.

## 2. Tourism development and placelessness

Progress in tourism development means that change will come to the land. The land where people did not live before is developed as a tourist site, and the living space for people in a certain land is changed to a space for tourists who come from the outside. Relph discussed the change of space as the relationship between placeness and placelessness. We live in a certain place. This place is an "existential space" and is a place that is meaningful to us (Relph, 1976, pp.45-48). In other words, place does not simply refer to space, but is given meaning by the memory and history of the people who are involved there. Having such meaning/nature, in other words placeness, we recognize a space as our place. We are born in a place, grow in a place, move to a place and die in a place. Each place plays a vital role in our lives.

Rapoport compared this place with the one of Aborigines, indigenous people in Australia and the one where it continued to be industrialized (Rapoport, 1969, pp.15-17). For Aborigines, their place was colored by legends, ceremonies and festivities, was where spirits live all over and was sacred with various meanings. However, Aboriginal place has lost its sacredness and has become more functional and practical as it has been developed and becomes an industrialized city one after another. In other words, Aborigines have lost placeness. Relph called this placelessness (Relph, 1976, p.25). Their place lost its sacredness and meaning, and instead has become an extremely homogeneous and geographical space.

The important point of what Relph has pointed out is that a tourist site exactly has the characteristics of this placelessness. In any tourist sites, originally, local people are born and raised, and their memories and history are engraved in the land, and the land becomes a place that is meaningful to them. In other words, with the culture being

built and maintained in the land, local people create the "locality" unique to the area colored by nature and the culture (Relph, 1976, p.89). This very "locality" becomes the tourism resource. Tourists seek and visit for the nature and culture unique to the area, and there they feel "locality" based on placeness. However, once it is recognized as a tourist site, the area itself starts to have economic feasibility, which requires to attract tourists and make them revisit. It is also necessary to secure the safety. Becoming a tourist site means that "locality" starts to have economic feasibility. Facilities for food and accommodation are necessary to receive tourists, and new tourism resources are required for increasing tourists. This is how tourism development is born. Therefore, in tourism development, it is important to raise curiosity and secure the safety. In addition, cleanliness and being enjoyable to everyone is also required. Placeness is rapidly lost and placelessness is produced by tourism development. Placeness creates, for local people, convenience and inconvenience to live, sometimes violence and conflict, even ideology and race conflict. On the other hand, tourism development eliminates these political issues as "locality" and creates a safe and homogeneous space. Relph pointed out that this is how tourism deprives placeness (Relph, 1976, p.115).

### **3. "Relocation" for placeness**

In addition to the construction of facilities and creation of tourism resources, tourism development promotes functional urbanization in terms of improvement of infrastructure and construction of residence, etc. in order to establish tourism industry. If tourists are comfortable to stay, local people are also comfortable to live. This urbanization, in pursuit of functionality for the people, produces placelessness. From this point of view, the residents in urban area are interested in rural areas and seek ecotourism and green tourism in order to regain their lost placeness. People see the townscape that has lost its history every day, therefore they are interested in old town and look for the traditional festival. Even though we go sightseeing to find the lost placeness, tourism development to attract tourists is producing placelessness. This is a paradoxical situation. This situation is one of the factors that impedes the tourism sustainability.

John Urry also discusses tourism and place. He argues that tourism is consuming place in the first place (Urry, 1995). When a certain place gets attention and tourists rush there, it gains a status as a tourist site and produces economic effects. However, once tourism is established to a certain extent, tourists look for the next tourist site. Urry points out the problem of mass tourism through a series of discussions that tourists are consuming places (Urry, 1995, p.108), and the concept of consumption of places at least overlaps with Relph's argument of placelessness. In other words, it is the consumption of place that produces placelessness.

However, space where placelessness is produced by tourism development and consumed as a tourist site, is originally a place with placeness. Here, there is room for reproduction of place, in other words there is room for "relocation". In the discussion of "the creation of the sense of place", Relph says that place is created by people's ordinary activities over a long period of time (Relph, 1976, p.84). People are born and raised, form and maintain society and culture. Meaningful place itself is created as an accumulation of days regardless of the amount and quality of curiosity and safety. Tourists stay for no more than a week. If local people can create and maintain the placeness in the land developed for tourism, and tourists could enjoy the "locality" based on the placeness during their stay, we could regard it as "relocation".

### **4. Post-development in tourism**

How can "relocation" be realized in the trend in which many countries undertake tourism development as a national

project? A series of "post-development" activities and the corresponding Latouche's concept of "décroissance" becomes useful (Latouche, 2007). At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned the meaning of the tourism industry in developing countries and developed countries. The whole idea behind the concept of post-development originates in the fact that President Truman of the United States made a distinction between underdeveloped areas and the United States in 1949. Since then, the dichotomy between underdeveloped areas and developed areas has become the norm. This dichotomy cannot simply be replaced by the dichotomy between developing countries and developed countries. The reason is that developing countries and developed countries are connected through capital investment and technical assistance, and a large gap is also created between developing countries.

The development indicated by dichotomy mentioned here is linked to modern Western values, such as economic growth as a typical example, progress, rationality, efficiency, and control of nature. Latouche ironically states that in project development it is important to exploit natural resources and human resources, value them and gain profit from them (Latouche, 2007, p.8). These ideas are collectively referred to as development paradigm. It is a contradiction that we must continue to develop despite the limitation of resources on the earth. A pioneering effort aimed at overcoming development paradigm can be found in Ivan Illich's theory. He criticized the current economic institutions, developed ideas for reproducing endogenous autonomy of human being, and conceived a way of a rich society that was not tied to economics (Illich, 1969, p.19). He also says that endogenous autonomy refers to cultural autonomy and vanuclal society which maintains this autonomy is necessary (Illich, 1973, p.89). We could say that vanuclal as cultural autonomy mentioned here is exactly synonymous with the "locality" indicated by Relph. This is because, on this premise, Illich also found "place" of spirituality built up over a long period of time in the area (Illich, 1981, p.51).

If we address development as one of the problems, we will have to mention the problem of "locality". Latouche also discusses regional development and regional growth in his study. Speaking of a region in general, it has various meanings, from micro to macro, in other words, from local to super national. A region refers to a wide range of areas. Latouche, however, states that whether a region is micro or macro, it refers to "territoire" and "terroir", as well as the material, cultural and human relations' properties that are rooted in each land (Latouche, 2004, p.42). This refers to the establishment of the limits, boundaries, and the hometown. According to Inuzuka, "territoire" is a place where local people approve their identity, and where the preservation of all their property is considered (Inuzuka, 2011, p.30). "Terroir" also includes the meaning of a hometown, as it is used as a term which means a rural area in French. Going back to the argument of placeness, regional development is nothing more than depriving a place to live which has placeness. The development and growth that originally a region aims for are to approve oneself with an increasing sense of safety, to preserve local properties, and to become a place to live. These are all premised on placeness. Interestingly, Latouche uses the phrase "invasive tourism" when he discusses tourism (Latouche, 2004, pp.25-38). It means that tourism development is invading a place to live by constructing facilities, etc., and also invading placeness by raising the curiosity of tourists and creating a safe space for them. "Territoire", "terroir" and local properties are abandoned by the placelessness that appears in its place. To be more precise, we can say tourism is selling locality. However, it sells the image of locality, not locality itself. It is a locality that tourists can look at from a safe place that is created for them. Converting local properties into local images and generating economic effects from them, hardly reduce the problems of the whole region or the whole society. Rather, it requires further conversion. Of course, there is no problem with tourism development or regional development itself. Latouche says that regional development and tourism development under development paradigm should not be confused with the growth of the region's

property, or the region itself (Latouche, 2007, p.34).

## 5. Conclusion: "relocation" from the perspective of décroissance

Latouche cites décroissance and "localism" as two forms of post-development. For example, Itonaga defines that décroissance avoids unifying modern economic values, and aims to create a local community with pluralistic values regarding re-localization that meet the local culture and climate, and with the participation of various stakeholders (Itonaga, 2011, p.7). In other words, it means going from modern Western values to more pluralistic values. These pluralistic values exactly mean the same as placeness in Relph's argument. Placelessness is to lose such pluralistic values. Latouche also says that "localism" means rooting in the area and concretely practicing autonomy to revive the land in each area (Latouche, 2007, p.35). In other words, in order to break away from placelessness, it is necessary to create and maintain placeness autonomously and to reconsider it as "relocation".

For us who are still in post-development, the new idea of "décroissance" is very effective in changing the paradigm. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand décroissance as a concrete form. It would be equally difficult even if we limit it to regional development. This is because "territoire" and "terroir" are too established based on pluralistic values. It is already daunting just to think about who the value is shared with in the area. However, a concrete path will be found by examining this problem in relation to tourism events. Because tourism events itself promote unification of values, the tourist site shall not sell its own image as a consumption target. By showing "locality" as a specific place, placelessness too will be able to be considered as one of the pluralistic values. This is why the idea of décroissance is important. By positioning placeness in it, we will find the ideal form of the region as a concrete "relocation". We should not forget that tourism started with people with different values interacting with one another in their lives.

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