

POTENTIALS FOR REDUCING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE THROUGH AGRO-TOURISM IN HAMBANTHOTA, SRI LANKA

Shammika Liyanage¹ H.M.R.P. Wijerathna^{2, *}, K. H. Hettiarachchi³,

¹Department of Public Policy, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

²Advanced Technological Institute, Tangalle, Sri Lanka

³International Department, Harbin University of Commerce, China

**rpwijerathna@gmail.com*

Agri tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to an area used basically for agricultural purposes. It attracts tourists to rural communities for a form of relaxation following a growing trend in tourism that is both educational and recreational. Tourism in general is increasingly recognized as an effective means of achieving structural peace in world. Structural violence is the process of deprivation of needs. It is characterized politically as repression, and economically as exploitation. Rahathgama in the Hambantota district has been identified as an area where people are disadvantaged by marginalization, and exploitation. The main objective of this research paper was to identify the agricultural tourism as a potential solution to reduce structural violence in this area by providing supplementary income for the farmer apart from farming and other pro-poor benefits of agro tourism. The methodology used in this paper to identify 'how agro tourism can contribute to reduce structural violence' was basically qualitative. Interviews were the main mode of gathering data. The methodology was based on the grounded theory which portrays the world as being complex and organized by both overt and hidden power structures. It was revealed during the process of data collection that structural violence was functioning by means of polarization of the social structures such as caste, ethnicity, economic status, nobility, educational status into different strata together with grouping of people into the consequential ends leading to social unease. Further, the corruption and impunity worsen the structural violence in Sri Lankan socio political structures. People engaged in agricultural activities are entrapped in a vicious system of unfair resource allocation and production exploitation operating through intermediaries. The research concludes that the present form of mass tourism has also been organized to facilitate this nature of structural violence due to selective operations via the top-down approach, delimiting the capacity for agriculture in the research site. The paper also suggests that it is necessary to seek remedies to make use of mass tourism efficiently in order to increase the capacity of agro entrepreneurs to overcome the destructive force of structural violence.

Keywords: Agro-tourism, Grounded Theory, Structural violence, Agro-entrepreneurs