Dimensions of mobilities, tourism and transition of cultural hegemony: a qualitative inquiry from Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Mobilities, encapsulating range of escalations in time and space by forming, transforming and retransforming social structures, cannot be understood in isolation. Cultural hegemony has been examined in post-colonial contexts while mobilities have been investigated conceptually, making empirical inquiries a noticeable absence. Though ‘what mobilities are’ have fairly been studied, why and how it occurs in tourism and cultural transformation need further examination. This theoretically motivated question led the present study of mobilities, tourism and cultural modifications. Emic and etic approaches are employed entrusting on qualitative methodology. Participants view that the dimensions of mobilities cause the modification of cultural values and spatial restructuring through mobility nodes influence on image reformation. Mobility nodes encourage movement of people resulting to drastic alterations in their mundane and consequently in value systems. Mobility drives revolving around capital, geopolitics and envisioned manipulations of cultural processes cause transition of cultural hegemony from former colonial powers to emerging Asian supremacies.

Keywords: cultural hegemony; local values; Sri Lanka; mobilities; tourism; qualitative enquiry.
1 Introduction

Historically, movement in time and space (mobilities) has been the key factor in all social formations, reformations and transformations at both micro and macro level. Mobilities over time and space have created serious cultural escalations of which the present social conditions are descending from Hannam et al. (2006). Uprising of sailing and naval cruise, railway and auto-mobility and air transportation have revolutionised the modern word in terms of corporal mobility. Furious developments of information and communication technology (ICT) have empowered the swift transmission of information and images over the space placing physical mobilities in the second place. Tourism being a stimulator for all such mobilities has always been an agent of large and global scale movement of people, information, material, information, capital, knowledge and images.

The simple idea of imperialism has been replaced with much complex process of global mobilities and this notion has created severe modifications at national and destination level (Hall, 2005). The capitalistic modernisation taking place together with global mobilities has opened up new directions due to the ownership of capital and investments have drastically been replaced (Buultjens et al., 2015). The legacies of rampant colonialism have undoubtedly created strong relationships with Asian tourist destinations and their former colonial rulers. The source markets for such destinations mainly composed of Western metropolis which have gradually replaced with Asian metropolis during last couple of years (Hannam, 2009). This together with escalations of geopolitical economy has created new frontiers of cultural transition that has already shown its sights in destinations like Sri Lanka. Though post colonialist, cultural, geopolitical and mobility issues in terms of tourism in former colonies have drawn academic researchers’ attention the changing nature (mobilities), gradual replacement and cultural transitions in destinations have not yet been investigated (Hannam et al., 2014).
Hegemony has historically been in the hands of the owners of capital. Similarly, they enjoy the political as well as the socio-cultural dominance. In the context of national culture, the central characteristics of national distinctiveness representing the nation’s historical glories and hegemonic structures are vital (Hsu and Huang, 2016). The cultural values are predicted based on the argument that it has immobile and static values and norms as claim by Urry (2007). This paper examines the dimensions of mobilities, tourism and their impacts over the modification of local cultural values at a growing tourist destination. It furthers the nexus of capital mobilities and subsequent human traffic such as mounting tourists and migrants induced by the mobility nodes own and managed by capital owners causing transition of cultural hegemony to emerging Asian powers. Further, we focus on the irruption of mobility nodes through long-term capital pumping together with manipulations of technological and soft cultural elements such as language and education (Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles, 2013). We challenge the existing understanding of colonial cultural hegemony in the study context and argue that the cultural landscape is slowly and steadily been replaced through increasing mobility nodes. Thereby we draw the attention towards modern ideologies of envisioned reformations of the discourse of cultural hegemony.

Cultures expressing their uniqueness and identity through difference, the place become a pivot in charactering and forming the said culture. This notion has largely been challenged through the escalating mobilities where transition centers such as city centers, airports becoming mobility nodes (Bauman, 2000). However, the essence, atmosphere and character of a place has to be captured through vibrant approaches for example both emic and etic. Mobilities have become the most controversial issue, since it increasingly integrate civilisations, economies and social groups (Gerharz, 2010). Mobilities caused directly or indirectly to the restructuring process that works across nations and individuals influencing entire human existence through capital and investment flows, strategic alignments (hegemony, aids, and loans) and flow of information and images (Anton Clavé, 2012). However, an overall destination’s cultural transition considering the emerging Asian cultural hegemony empowered through mobilities at destinations seems a novel area of study (Pieris, 2014). This study could be considered as crucial in this aspect. It concentrates on the transition of cultural hegemony at a former western colony which is being gradually replaced by emerging Chinese presence and its cultural trends. The intensive development projects funded and undertaken by Chinese in postwar Sri Lanka (Colombo Port City development project, Southern Highway, Mattala International Airport and Hambanthota Harbour) are mobility nodes through which serious socio-cultural transformations are experienced (SLTDA, 2015). Moreover, the study extends to examine why and how the socio-cultural, economic and behavioural modifications triggered by tourist destination mobilities in south Asian island destination.

The study of mobilities has predominantly been in conceptual and theoretical spheres making empirical approaches a significant absence (Attanapola and Lund, 2013). We strive to fulfil this gap through an emic and etic approach in a fast developing Island tourist destination in South Asia. The study is positioned on an interpretivist phenomenological method emphasising on the individuals’ perceptions as central units of the socio-cultural formations and reformations. Human beings have always been active and sensitive players of the social evolution process and subsequently the formation of social knowledge. Individual interpretations are of pivotal in the construction of social theory. Qualitative research work that is in-depth interviews, principle researcher’s
observations and extensive review of literature and relevant policy documents were undertaken from 2009 to 2016. Long-term observations and friendly conversations supported to establish deeper depiction of concurrent socio-cultural phenomenon. The selected procedures were fostered to encourage participants to reveal perceptions and impressions concerning transition of cultural values in the face of growing mobilities. This paper mainly focuses on the ways in which the cultural values are in transition parallel to dimensions of mobilities in the context of tourism development in Sri Lanka.

2 Literature review

2.1 Mobilities and tourism thesis

Mobilities have broadly been investigated at tourist destination context see for example; Hannam et al. (2014), Lyons et al. (2013), Dredgea and Jamal (2013), Sheller (2009), Edensor (2007), Hannam et al. (2006), Hall (2005), Cresswell et al. (2008), and Bell and Ward (2000). Macro level movement of populations, material and physical objects, technological relocations, information, communication, ideas and image transfers, temporal transformations of dwellers through daily movements all count as common forms of mobility triggers at tourist destinations, Hannam et al. (2006). Mobilities being in various forms as such metaphors, spatial entities and process could be seen as the central agent of social existence. In consequence, sociological investigation should be at the centre of mobilities (Urry, 2000). Therefore, the tourism research, socio-cultural alterations and impacts of tourism fall within the purview of mobilities discourse. The tourism related businesses are driven by relationships, and to make strong relationships at local level, the locations for development and expansion are selected in proximity to geography and culture. Platenkamp and Botterill (2013), claim the existing tourism literature and the present understanding is much more Eurocentric and neglect the focus on other cultural clusters in the world. Despite the epistemological and methodological advancements in tourism thesis the understanding still remains predominately contextual to colonial practices as per Wang and Cheng (2015).

Social networks keep far distant people at fingertips whilst the time with physically present people is spent in distant terms (Hannam et al., 2006). Hence, the mobilities of infrastructure, technology transmission and communication networks have caused shifts in socio-cultural life at large. Henceforth, the traditional social science approaches of treating place, dwellings and social structures as stable has invariably been challenged by the post-modern liquid mobilities claiming more appropriate research approaches both theoretical and methodological (Hannam, 2014; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2008). The socio-cultural structures of local communities are among imperative consequences of mobilities turn. Subsequently, it changes the status quo of a socio-cultural structure by temporal modifications of values and this phenomenon is the central focus of present study. The detachment and liquid modernity are fundamental consequences of mobilities and those modifications in time and space invariably alter socio-cultural life, value systems and their perceptions even though the resident community really does not move (Hannam et al., 2006).

Hannam et al. (2006) comment that the conception of global human mobilities should be should be researched and understood in more and more local context. Routine transport activities, embracement of material culture by local residents and also temporal
interconnections among mobilities and immobilities should be key concerns of mobility research agenda. Hence, the socio-cultural, economic and behavioural propensities of local residents amidst global mobilities prompted by tourist destination development claim more interpretation (Hannam, 2014). The contemporary social life has become a network of multiple and extended interconnections among far distant places. Such interconnections are empowered by mobility nodes such as galleries, clubs, hotels, parks, touristic scenic spots, beaches, petrol stations, leisure complexes, cities, rail stations and airports and so on. The uplifted mobilities enabled by aforementioned nodes invariably influence daily life as converse by Normark (2006).

2.2 Dimensions of mobilities

At the turn of 21st century John Urry conveyed the new mobilities paradigm drawing social researches towards a new frontier. In essence, Urry’s (2000) postulation stands that social formations and transformations are bound to a representation of rights and duties of the members of a given nation state. The continuous transformation of the endogenous social physiognomies of the individualistic Western society or in other words numerous mobilities modifies the discourse of sociology. This shifting nature of the social mobilities calls for novel approaches in examining sociological thesis which Urry (2000, 2003) claims it should be understood as ‘mobile’ instead ‘societal’. However, Kellerman (2006) mentions that the mobilities should not be isolated merely to an individual’s social transformations and claims that spatial mobilities are significant dimensions of an individual’s daily movements. Urry (2007) and Cresswell (2010) introduced forms of mobilities positioning it as a new paradigm of social science.

The contemporary typology of mobilities recognised by the majority entails five means of mobilities and they are; corporeal mobility, physical movement of objects, imaginative mobility, virtual mobility and communicative mobility. Various forms of human movements such as leisure travel, work, daily journeys and migrations fall under corporeal mobility. The physical movements of material objects such as exchanges of goods among consumers, producers, distributors and individuals are referred to physical mobilities. Image mobilities or metaphors (Urry, 2007) arises through continues process of formulation and reformulation of imageries predominantly through telecasting and broadcasting of electronic media networks. Virtual mobility which has revolutionised the contemporary social life refers to the real time moves in the internet through various apps and social networks surpassing the geographic and remoteness barricades (Larsen et al., 2006). Finally and most importantly the modern social life is wrapped around ICT breakthroughs. Interpersonal communications take place through telephones, e-mails, video call, GPS and so on fall under communication mobilities. Larsen et al. (2006, p.47) postulate that these types of mobilities are embedded in contemporary social life and are independent to each other. The advocates of mobilities paradigm reason that the contemporary social life is fundamentally depend on the actual and potential capability of an individual to move in time and space (Hannam, 2009; Urry, 2007).

2.3 Mobilities, tourism and cultural values

Individual representations and reactions depend on their value system. Values are individual attributes that character the person’s needs and motivations. Values largely
depend on culture and different cultural groups represent different values. Few studies have addressed the influence of mobilities on cultural value (Reisinger and Turner, 1998). Particularly, tourism induced mobilities have drawn less attention in academic research (Hannam, 2009). However, mobilities being a vast concept that encompass whole range of movements in time and space, differentiating tourism driven mobilities is challenging (Urry, 2012). On the other hand tourism is a clear contributor in socio-cultural and economic change. Specially, it is unique in changing community values as claim by Reisinger and Turner, (1998). However, given the changes occur at personal level and are reciprocal in nature (local community benefits from tourism too), the impact of tourism on socio-cultural changes are not apparent as that of, e.g., construction or irrigation development project. It is therefore, challenging to trace such silent and influential impacts through conventional approaches of inquiry.

Tourism has proven to be an extremely complex business. Equally, communities comprised of different groups with different interests are complex making the whole system a web of interconnections. Tourism on the other hand has got an extraordinary prominence due to the political advantages. It has been manifested by politicians in their political agendas. Tourism has essentially a role as well as a key driver of globalisation process. The global transformations have been conceptualised under mobilities or moving temporalities according to Sheller (2009). The proponents of mobilities paradigm argue that the global scale movements and continuous formation and transformation of physical, intellectual, informational and emigrational things (both tangible and intangible) keep the globe moving at all time. Under such moving circumstances values and images (metaphors) remain unexceptional from the circle (Featherstone and Lash, 1995). The increased perceptions of heterogeneity or in other words cultural homogeneity, integration of distinct groups in to a larger whole, have been identified as key consequences of global mobilities in which tourism plays a significant role. As mobilities spreads out to others in the forms of exchange of goods and services, capital, information and communication, reciprocal transactions, migrations and asylum seeking, travel and transportation, tourism becomes a part and partial of the process. This is due to its irresistible linkages and stimulations to former developments.

2.4 Tourism and cultural hegemony

The significance of postcolonial studies have widely been recognised and assimilated in existing mobilities literature. Hegemony, representation, cultural values and heritage in post-colonial contexts have extensively been examined (Amoamo and Thompson, 2010). The human traffic and post-colonial development projects of former colonies underpin the prejudices and stereotypes of former colonial masters. Contrarily, Hall (2004) argued that there are powerful challenges to simple view of post colonialism which is growing from every aspect. Implications of economic, political and socio-cultural stance of developing countries tourism discourse has been referred to postcolonial discourse. In addition, the socio-cultural modifications operated and dominated through mobility nodes are expected to dominate the local peripheries reinforcing the images and metaphors of hegemony controllers. However, expansion of intellectual space in the context of mobilities and cultural hegemony seems less attention. Yet the existence of such phenomena could not be denied due to the above absence nor undervalue its significance.

Nunkoo and Smith (2013), argue “Hegemonic cultural forms help to reproduce relations of domination, usually by combining and articulating elements of preexisting
Discourses in contingent and historically specific ways”. Re-established relationships through dominations in different spheres at destinations lead to shift the cultural hegemony and are intensified through uncontrollable mobilities of destination communities. The three key components of culture as mention by Reisinger (2009), namely material objects, ideas values and attitudes and behaviour patterns are precious ingredients in tourism industry. Symbols in simple terms are something that represents something else. A national culture is represented through various symbols. Tourism is invariably attached to such symbols, for example, Eiffel tower of Paris, Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal of India and so forth and also they have become iconic symbols of their national cultures. Consequently, the cultural symbols representing national identities tend to foster their cultural hegemony over visitors. When such cultural symbols become agents and nodes of mobilities which are owned and managed by powerful nations at tourist destinations, signify hegemonic escalations in terms of iconic cultural symbols (Hannam et al., 2006).

Economic liberalisation has opened up a new avenue for those own capital to enforce their interests on local soil. Particularly, the loans or grants are offered subject to such neo-liberal structural adjustments. Consequently, tourism rather a local development process or cultural rejuvenation tool has become a focus for foreign exchange earnings in developing economies. Evidently, the concurrent tourism is driven through the accommodation of the hegemony of the source market. Hence the source market escalation invariably shifts the hegemony to the emerging market in order to ensure the access to capital and market (Cairns, 2008). Metropolitan capitalistic countries (former colonial masters) try to dominate the foreign tourism market, where tourist flows to their former colonies make them ease in every aspect. Tourism services and facilities are developed and promoted focusing such markets since the investments, technology and technical know-how transfer from capitalistic countries. However, when the market trends change the industry is bound to address the expectations of new markets where their interests are recognised invariably. The type of facilities, food, guiding languages, brochures, resort facilities, air transport routes all such services are repositioned to accommodate the new tourists expectations. Economic and political dependency has opened up the core periphery relationship between capitalistic societies and tourist destinations (Klein, 2007).

Nash (1989) explains the situation as: “At the most general level, theories of imperialism refer to the expansion of a society’s interests abroad. These interests – whether economic, political, military, religious, or some other – are imposed on or adopted by an alien society, and evolving inter-societal transactions, marked by the ebb and flow of power, are established”. In the above respect the tourist destinations and their societies are imposed with foreign interests of socio-economic, political and so forth. Significantly, the evolving inter-societal transactions facilitated through the above enforcements tend to shift the former colonial character towards the new imperialists who have put forward their financial, geopolitical and cultural movements. Ribera (2009) claim that cultural imperialism and colonialism go hand in hand resulting organised systems of domination in which many a third world post-colonial economies are recipients at present. Culture has become a key component of invasion since the long-term survival of invaders largely depends on cultural hegemony (Reisinger, 2009). Hence, colonialists, as well as post colonialists have seriously focused on reinforcement of their cultures at destination through every possible engagement.
3 Methodology

This paper focused on the dimensions of mobilities, tourism and transition of local cultural values in Sri Lanka. The study context being dimensions of mobilities, local cultural values, their modifications at tourist destination level; comprehensive analysis of literature had to support the methodological choice. To support such deeper stimulations of individual feelings and anticipations in tracing sensitive issues such as changing cultural trends, qualitative approach was employed as it was identified more appropriate in answering research questions. Based on their findings Boley et al. (2014) have emphasised the importance of qualitative inquiries using in-depth interviews to deepen the understanding of psychological, social and political nexus of the communities in tourism development areas. The literature also reveals that empirical approaches in tourism and mobilities studies are of inadequate. Further, both emic and etic approaches have been widely applied in empirical studies of anthropological context. Extensive review of literature provided a guideline for the interview framework. Nonetheless, the interviews were not restricted to a specific frame and were conducted in a form of free and open discussions where necessary probing into depth was enabled. Accordingly, 27 unstructured, in-depth interviews were conducted by principle researcher during the period of July 2015 to February 2016 at different locations of the Island. The interviewee list was comprised of community (leaders) members (07) from different tourism zones (1-Ahungalla, 1-Kalutara, 1-Hikkaduwa, 1-Sigiriya, 1-Dambulla, 1-Mihintale and 1-Anuradhapura), academics of tourism discipline from four different universities (07), public sector tourism professionals both at national and provincial level (06) and private sector tourism professionals from different tourism zones (07). The audio records of interviews on average 30 to 49 minutes were transcribed followed by open and axial coding. The coded output of interview transcriptions was scrutinised through content analysis and winnowed narrations to extract relevant contents in order to answer the broad research questions. Additionally, principle researcher’s involvement in the tourism industry since 2004 as an academic and industry professional was helpful for the etic inputs to the study. Observations and scrutiny of relevant policy papers and documents contributed in terms of enhancing scope of mobility dimensions. The interview transcriptions, observation outcomes, extracted summaries of documents have aided in building phenomenological arguments on mobility dimensions, tourism and transition of cultural hegemony in the Island.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Emerging mobilities and travel

One of the central views of mobilities proponents is that technological advancements are inseparably linked to travel or in other words to spatial and temporal movements of individuals. Urry (2007), comment that modes of communications are essentially related to travel creating forms of fluidities on the move. The interrelationships between physical and virtual travel have drawn a significant attention in the transport literature according to Aguilera, (Cairns, 2008). The mobilities at destinations extend this notion by adding the enhanced flexibility in terms of travel time, diversity of activities undertaken during a
travel, variety of modes of transport in choice and parallel presence in several locations physically and virtually.

“……the highway from airport to Colombo and then to South coast has increased the efficiency of travel time……for example, a tourist directly can come to south coast……the Mattala airport has dramatically uplifted tourism in the southern region……it has similar effects on the local lives that daily movements of people have drastically advanced in terms of time…..”

A tourism academic in fifties

In terms of travel time flexibility the introduction of mono-rail network in Colombo suburbs would drastically transform the travel not only of tourist but of residents for daily activities. The development of the Southern highway has significantly enhanced travel time by reducing earlier five hours to a single hour to reach Southern coast from Colombo. This changed the lifestyle of people of Matara and around since the temporary dwellers lodged in Colombo for working purposes can daily travel from home for work. This tendency has led individuals to be more organised and concern over time and to work on a time table in their routine as argue by Urry (2007). The monorail project from Negombo to Colombo and Colombo suburbs is expected to enhance travel time flexibility in a great deal. Urry (2007, p.99) mention the effects of railway as; “the permeation of a discourse around the need for time to be saved, organised, monitored, regulated and especially to be timetabled”.

“….It would definitely enhance and enrich our lives by saving our time….now I leave 5.30 to travel 35 kilometer for work to reach Colombo from Negombo. It is huge waste of my time every day I waste about 5 hours on the road and this has been my routine for last 16 years of service….the proposed mono rail can save me the time while I have enough time for other affairs such as for family, picnic and play…..”

A community member forties

Elliott and Urry (2010, p.32) claim that advanced communication through enhanced ICT shows a shift from clock time to negotiated time. This even goes to the extent that physical travel is replaced through the virtual presence with the aid of ICT.

“….I used to travel around for meetings…..once a month all my managerial staff summoned to Colombo from all over the country for review meetings…..inspections and seminars…..however with the video conference facilities we have established in head office…..deny the physical travel from Colombo to far distant places…..from our hotels to Colombo frequently…..instead we conduct teleconference meetings with all out hotel managers and just need once in two months to travel to location…..we basically have cut down on our travel time greatly so that we can focus on our work……”

Corporate manager in forties

Advent of mobile devices particularly during travel has enhanced daily pursuits of activities. Their usage during train journey given the enhanced applications presently embedded with. In addition to travel time the usage of travel time in effective ways have been enhanced by mobile devices and ICT technology at large [Elliott and Urry, (2010), p.32–33].
“…twenty years back I used to work out of Colombo and travel often by train…and…it was just a sleep of 5 hours……and just a waste….but today…..I use the time to check the progress of the operations….monitor costs….calculate wage percentages….review CVs of candidates…check and reply emails and any more….at least I can read in a train journey with my I pad……”

Corporate director in fifties

In essence, the shifting mobilities fueled by advanced telecommunication technology and devices have reevaluated travel time in terms of its value. Given enhanced usage and applications of ICT the above view is challenged in terms of travel time usage depending on its user’s choice. The traffic handle through a single airport would face challenges with the growing prospects of the travel and tourism industry of the Island and in this respect the need and justification of a second international airport is reasoned.

“……The proposed four million tourists by 2022 need charter flight stopover facilities at destinations….and the Hambanthota International airport is expected to serve as a circulation hub in the South Island’s tourism industry…….reduction of circulation time and ground transport could be optimized with the second international airport dedicated to travel and tourism ….linking the fast developing East coast and south coast…..through South-East highway…….”

Public Sector Tourism Officer in forties

4.2 Mobilities, tourism and changing cultural values

“You see the changes over time are invertible. As you said the intensifying movements of people have created drastic modification particularly at tourist destinations……. Hikkaduwa for example if you compare before mass tourism in early 60’s it was a post-colonial agricultural and fishery area……and today the changed due to tourism is inexpressible…….specially the way of life and their local customs are replaced with foreign practices…Greeting is a classic example for this….I think it’s all over the world……internet and social networks have intensified the consequences…..”

A Community member in sixties

The above account of a resident clearly illustrates the tourism destinations’ cultural modification. Image, communicative and technology driven mobilities at local level alter local cultural values and is evident at Hikkaduwa a popular mass tourist destination in the Island.

Hall (2005), debates that forced resettlement schemes for tribal populations are caused by tourism development. Mobilising tourist services and touristic facilities in remote rural communities demand acquisition of their lands and at least relocation of their habitats making drastic alterations in their customary way of life (Hannam, 2009). Similar conditions have been experienced at Cultural Triangle (the triangle linking the premium historical heritage sites which are classified as UNESCO world heritage sites in Sri Lanka). One of the significant features of local cultural landscape is the Sinhala Tamil New Year (Soorya Mangalya or Sun Festival). It has largely been commercialised and customised to tourists’ amusement in present context. The comment below explains the alteration of cultural traditions during New Year celebrations amidst tourism induced mobilities.
“…cultural triangle is the heart of Sinhalese cultural heritage……during the festival we used to visit and worship parents, elders and neighbors offering a bunch of betel leaves.....celebrate with traditional games.....today the new year greetings send on mobile apps and younger generation hug elders instead of worshiping them......selection of new year prince and princes is an important custom of this festival and now the trend is to select the foreign new year prince and princes and the whole festival has become a show piece for them……..in this culturally significant land of the island.....”

A community member in forties

The traditional custom of visiting parents and elders to worship with a bunch of betel has been changed to send a new year greeting on a mobile app, the traditions of the festival have been customised to suit tourists amusements and importantly the worshiping has been changed to hug an elder or parent altering the cultural traditions drastically given the tourism destination mobilities in particular communication, virtual and image mobilities.

Theoretically as well as practically relocation of dwellers rift their social balance and socio-cultural consequences of such relocations need further elucidation within the light of mobilities paradigm. Hannam et al. (2006), Sheller (2009) and Wang and Xu (2015), reason that the analysis of mobilities encompass the magnitudes for different people, places and socio-cultural modifications. Considerable number of people is on the move or have subjected to tourism triggered mobilities non-voluntarily. The tourism destination mobilities are of inevitable and the modification of local cultural values find no exception.

“……I still can remember when I started my career in tourism in down south in 60’s…it was tourists who behave in their culture........it was a strange to local people who looked astonishingly at them......yet today local people have gone far beyond tourists in the same area in terms of cultural rifts......all in all......it has become a temporary feeling and I think a strong culture is abstract in this context and local values have been largely changed as well as replaced......and continuously being modified......so-called local cultural values are rare to find in the present fast changing context......”

A tourism professional in fifties

The groups of people against the land acquisitions of central or federal governments and who are against to develop touristic zones around their habitats are forced to be on the move forcefully to support tourism development in their territories. The fisheries village in Benthota area which was acquired by the government for tourism resort development in 60’s has been relocated one KM away from the coastal belt and has upside down in terms of their cultural traditions. The traditional fishery village on the coast existed for centuries had a Christian post-colonial cultural tradition.

“...respect to each other mutual assistance and communal accomplishment were key dimensions of our village.....we were forced to come here and the lands were given to hotel construction....our children had to look for hotel jobs.....become beach boys or sellers....I can’t imagine the traditional customs of our village which were several decades back.....now our own people kill each other for selling a suit to tourists.....”

A community member in seventies
The arrival of tourism forced resident fishery community to depend on tourism and have become service providers from different aspects. As explained in the comment the competition has aggravated and the community members killing each other for money making from tourists. The physical mobilities and tourism driven life styles have pushed them towards an un-imaginary social context.

4.3 Social vs. physical proximity

As Urry (2007, p.194) proposed the mobilities paradigm entails the concept of network capital or in his own words is accessibility which is in four distinctive forms. While advanced corporal mobilities enhance the physical accessibility, the social networks enable emotional proximity in travel. Network capital is also significant in terms of social inclusion which has enabled individual’s capability to access advanced ICT challenging the physical remoteness.

”…..it is hard to find someone without a mobile today…..and they have the access to social networks of various kind. Similarly they have become members of various communities on line…..I individually feel I’m enriched socially with my strong social network online…..”

Tourism academic in forties

The modern society enjoys closer social relationships and they play a significant role in business and professional achievements since the whole heap of relationships are critical in contemporary complex social networks. Contrarily, those are marginalised from the ICT mobilities experience disadvantages in terms of social capital causing a range of disadvantages (Rettie, 2008).

”…..I have been working with tourists for nearly 30 years now…and good old days I used to write letters and sending postcards….and if we really want to meet each other one has to come all the way….one of my good friend has visited out hotel more than 20 times now…..that was in 70’s and today we can talk to each other face to face every time we want keeping emotionally attached all the time……for example during my career in I never have been at home for new year…..but no that the availability of Skype and Facebook I can be with family on line for the new year customs…..”

Tourism employee in fifties

The elevated social networks through advanced ICT have largely reduced the need of physical travel while mobilities of corporal travel have enhanced physical access. The individuals’ role and the connectivity to social networks essentially depend on a range of factors such as education level, profession, language proficiency, personnel preferences, etc. For example, of our sample four were not members of any cyber community who were old community members and public servants who mainly were found to be computer illiterate. Such immobilities observed to barriers for social networks and prompt information acquisition.

4.4 Social mobilities

It was in 1854 the eponymous Thomas Cook declared that “the whole world is on the move” [cited in Urry, (2000), p.148]. The development of railway and the industrial revolution broke the immobilities of feudal society. Ever since, the moving time and
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space (temporality) central to mobilities have led the society in to a web of interdependencies. Irrespective of the context any involvement of human traffic, movement of physical objects and material things and transfer of intangible information, images and metaphors fall into the subject of mobilities discipline. More over technological transfer at any context including most modern technological know how to outdated technologies is included in mobilities. In summation mobilities concept is inclusive of plotting, investigating and comprehending and across the board human traffic, physical and material objects, capital and financial flows, information and communication breakthroughs.

“….we have never seen children wearing skating pads on Habarana.....its tourism and the consumption culture,.....thinking pattern have largely been replaced with global movements….in one way it’s inevitable since the whole world is open and present socio-economic conditions are of appreciating such moves.……the traditional agro-based peaceful society is not the dream of new generation........mainly what they see...hear influence their value system……”

A tourism academic in forties

“The new highways were thus not only a measure of the culture’s technological prowess but they were also fully integrated into the cultural economy” [Urry, (2000), p.62].

The movement of objects together with people or in other words the things in motion is active agents of human socio-cultural contexts. For example the shoes, backpacks, sun glasses, clothes or books carried by tourists influence the consumption pattern, purchasing behaviour or the way people think how they should travel (thinking process). Therefore, the mobilities of objects facilitated by tourism at tourist destination regions cause socio-cultural modifications. Their spirit on such objects, popularity of such objects and socio-cultural esteem of owning such creations would result shaping socio-cultural values in the given context. The communities which are located in close proximity to each other are subjects of various forms of mobilities. Similarly, such communities are dwellings to many a metaphors which could be raced through travel and contrarily, former communities themselves are components of a network of such places. On one hand local communities are dwellings of consumption in which travel and tourism consumption take place. Hence, the dwellings, culture and temporalities are of goods and services for tourism business. On the other hand these communities are victims of temporal mobilities. Hence the mobilities transform local communities while local communities themselves change over time.

“.....the society we had in 60’s when we started tourism is entirely different to the one we see today....specially the coastal fishing communities have become tourism oriented service providers and business operators or at least beach boys.....the socio-cultural impacts due to tourism and its mobilities in this region is intensive.....massive capital investments, resort developments and destination promotion have changed the lifestyles of local residents...that of including our own......”

Tourism employee in forties

The local cultural values are in one way a resistance to guests in their dwellings. This has clearly been explained in Albion Free State Manifesto of 1974, a ‘network ... of independent collectives and communities’ [cited in Urry, (2000), p.145]. The local community behaviours and activities such as local trade and marketing, openness of
women and children, care and consideration towards animals, festivals, music and dances tend to create a loosen practice.

### 4.5 Image and virtual mobilities

“…….large resorts, tourists’ consumption patterns have shifted thinking of locals……how many people, children today need to go to McDonalds?…….how many children want to go to Disney or at least want a Mickey mouse for them……it has extremely been commercial……advertising……information and image building……have influenced the local cultural values……”

Tourism Academic in thirties

Dwellings and dwellers have become subjects of intermittent traffics of time and space. Correspondingly, metaphors and communication and information transmission are on the continuous move even at a faster phase compared to that of material objects (Sheller, 2012). Hannam et al. (2006), claim that the gravity of potential and actual mobilities of information and communication breakthroughs re-organises and re-structures social life. In accordance with this notion the mobilities of information, images and communication technology at a tourist destination consistently influence on socio-cultural values of dwellers. The above comment illustrates this situation.

“the way tourists communicate…usage of electronic communication devices and application software attract younger generation…….tourist cultural interaction to local people….boys of the villages dream to wear a sun glass, to buy a camera…….dress like them…for example tourist guides….this of course influence on the children’s thoughts…and they dream to be like tourists and tourist guides whom they see as aliens in their mind…….”

Tourism academic in fifties

### 4.6 Emerging cultural hegemony

“…..I think excessive Chinese investments such as Port City in Colombo will be centers of future lives. The transport centers like Airport, harbor, highways all managed by the Chinese. If go out several thousands of Chinese tourists and workers could see all most every tourist place…….the tourism services such as guiding …food…and all getting organized around Chinese market…….I feel we are shifting our tourism and cultural grounds to welcome and accommodate emerging Chinese trends……”

Tourism employee in fifties

The increasing presence of China and India through their aid schemes, infrastructure development projects and geopolitical negotiations signify an emerging transition of cultural hegemony of the South Asian Island nation. Particularly, the vast infrastructure development undertakings of China such as Colombo Port City Development project, Second international airport, harbor development in Southern Sri Lanka and highway network linking Colombo to South, suburbs and Kandy are emerging drivers of former transition. Additionally, soft cultural programs launched such as language and cultural exchanges, deploying hundreds of Chinese language teaches in the island, increasing Chinese tourist arrivals, migrant workers and long-term residents, other individual Chinese investments has shown a cultural revival in the small Island nation in South Asia.
“……the image and symbols are the keys we understand and perceive things……now if you see the way our younger generation thinks for example what they want to be…where they want to go….I think it is totally different how it used to be…many youngsters are dreaming to enter into a Chinese company….go to China…… or run a business with Chinese….learn their language….what is this? It is nothing but transition of the cultural and perceptual landscape of the present generation…..historically this happened through Silk Route and once India…later Western colonialists and now the Emerging power of the world that is China….It is common that small Island nations are severely affected by such global forces and we have to live in that……”

Tourism Official in forties

Indeed, both residents and tourist's performances have been the focus of much contemporary research particularly by researchers who have begun to view tourism as increasingly constitutive of everyday life rather than being simply an escape from it. The concept of mobilities helps us to understand global tourism in the context of other social and spatial travel processes. Hence, the Euro-colonial cultural orientation is gradually been replaced with increasing presence of China and India in the Island. Tourism has been a key facilitator in the modern transition of cultural hegemony from Western colonial masters to emerging Asian powers reinforced by massive mobilities of capital. Such spaces emerge as cultural symbols and ultimately become mobility nodes of daily life leading to transfer of cultural hegemony together with other soft cultural manipulations.

4.7 The way forward

The newly established Chinese international Funding body Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with a capital of $100 billion has allotted $40 billion for the development of Silk Route under ‘one road one belt project’. Sri Lanka tourism promotion bureau took aggressive promotions in China with the help of Embassy in Beijing and three consulates located at Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu. Chinese tourist arrivals represented a growth rate of 71.9% in early 2015 and reached quarter million mark end of the year. Hundreds of Chinese were granted permanent visa that came as tourist guides and translators to cater the increasing number of arrivals. The tendency of Sri Lankan’s to learn Mandarin is growing rapidly. Chinese food, usage of their apps such as Weibo, Wechat and QQ is spreading promptly signifying the adjustments of local tourism product.

“….when we were kids our dream was to speak French and German like fluent local tourist guides…..we often herd Bounjour….or Guten Morgen while the terms are replaced among adolescents today with Ni hao…..and many of the boys here dream of speaking Chinese fluently…and working hard on that……”

A community member in forties

The tourism supply is getting adjusted to demanding markets where required soft transformations in language, greeting, food and behaviours are slowly been replaced. Transport, physical movements of goods, ICT, image and virtual mobilities are core forms in the ongoing transition which even have become beyond the control of destination management organisations. Tourist arrivals from China are growing rapidly and individual investments, public infrastructure development projects are acquiring the
local economic body. Consequently, soft escalations of language, culture and food and beverage are in progress.

“……you see all the universities here are provided with the Chinese language teacher and the language and cultural education is in progress……we find Airport, harbour, highways, port city, power plants all funded and managed by China……this means economically we are tied……and the next step is the cultural transformation as we saw with the colonialists……I can tell you the cultural transformation is in progress……this means their way of thinking is spontaneously transformed……and these signify the future generation’s thinking and cultural nurture is revolving around emerging Asian power…I’m not telling that its good or bad but what is happening as we see is this……obviously industries like tourism has to be organized and grow around emerging markets……similarly the socio-cultural transformations are taking place…”

Tourism Academic in fifties

The above detail account summarises the whole process and the tourism industry is getting ready to cater growing markets. Mobility nodes such as highways, airports, theatres, convention centres and most importantly the port city are emerging cultural symbols facilitating the mobilities of tourists, migrants and local people. The soft cultural transformations are ongoing and this notion is no different to the former colonial cultural hegemony. The post-colonial cultural and socio-economic powers are slowly transmitting to the emerging Asian nations-capital whose contemporary corporal, capital, information; image and ICT mobilities are more powerful.

5 Conclusions and implications

Mobilities, which are one of the central phenomena of social existence, have been the research focus of various disciplines. Tourism, culture and mobilities have drawn substantial number of literary work of which many are conceptual in nature. Absence of empirical evidence has been a much discussed issue in tourism mobilities research for years. Mobilities which encapsulate global and local level movement of people, capital, information, material and intangible heritage across boundaries influence distant socio-cultural structures and processes linking them into evolving global networks. Moreover, the intensifying socio-economic mobilities revolving around tourism in the postwar tourism development context of Sri Lanka provided a fertile ground to test such discourses. Qualitative approach was entrusted since it was more appropriate to answer the research questions. Corporeal and physical movements, metaphors, virtual and communicative dimensions of mobilities were observed in tourism context and study draws following theoretical and empirical inferences.

Fundamentally, the notion of mobilities underlines the fluidity of people, capital, cultures, and objects and so on. It has become a route that questions the conservative interactions among places, cultures and people. The infusion and manipulations of meanings in time and space has long been the practice through execution of capital and hegemony. Mobility itself is natural but less effective until it is materialised through manipulations of people, processes and objects both physically and socio-culturally. Tourism in modern context has close relationships to mobilities and has been embodied to move cultural structures towards intended directions at macro level. Thus, a critical
Dimensions of mobilities, tourism and transition of cultural hegemony

Analysis of mobilities from tourism perspectives and their cultural consequences in the post-war Sri Lanka is the core focus of this study. It was evident that the transformation of monetary capital to cultural capital through hegemonic enforcements and spatial restructuring is in progress and the South Asian island nation is in swift motion from its Western colonial charisms to Asian traditions. The mobility of capital in recent years is playing the key role in organising and governing human behaviours, governments and trade at large and this notion was clearly observed in Sri Lankan context.

It was evident that mobility dimensions are enormously powerful in modifying and altering mundane way of life. Findings showed direct and reciprocal impacts of mobilities over local cultural values. Governance and pluralisation of destination management implied a complex network of mobilities at tourist destination context. The responsibility-complexity has created chaos in managing contradictories and it has easily been possible to neglect adverse consequences. Hence, destination management under concurrent mobilities context has been of extremely challenging. It is recommended to form tourism governing bodies at destination level which comprises all stakeholders and empower such bodies to manage consequences at local level. The notion of local community has been under severe transformation amidst up roaring mobilities which has raised the question of what actually are the local community’s original cultural values. Structural changes and complex destination management together with changing nature of community itself induced by mobilities have challenged the traditional, fixed and closed communities and made them more fluid in both space and time. Rickly et al. (2016) conclude that the present community could be identified as a group of people sharing common values, beliefs and identities yet not essentially dwell in the same geographical area. This was observed factual in the context of fast moving tourist destinations observed in this study. Respondents viewed that communities have become more abstract and as a result unique community values reflected decades back are no more envisaged. Similarly, through evolving global communication devices and apps, local people have become members of more virtual communities simultaneously. It was observed an online nomadism which has led the local communities to represent plural community values of various online communities.

Powerful mobility forces in the Island such as capital, labour, migration and vast arrival of tourists from China and India have shown steady increase indicating shifting cultural values. Language being a key feature of culture, Chinese language was widely popular and replacing the popularity of English, German and French in the decade of 70’s. The study concludes with the notion that tourism is a result of international geopolitical power escalations, which found in the hands of European nations in post-industrial period, is shifting towards emerging Asian nations. Small islands like Sri Lanka highly depend on tourism have become fields of cultural transition amidst global mobilities. Local cultural values have become a pray of globally driven mobilities which are revolving around capital. Tourism has become a powerful agent of socio-cultural transition in the context of local destination communities. The previous hegemonic undertakings of colonial masters through establishing and enforcing their socio-cultural systems in the island are replacing with the ones of emerging Asian nations such as China and India. Particularly, the cultural alterations are stimulated through large scale tourist arrivals, massive investments in infrastructure, education and services. The capital driven geopolitical moves arrives in the island in the form of investments and aids slowly transmitting the colonial legacies to Sino-Indo cultural hegemony.
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