NGOs in ecotourism: patrons of sustainability or neo-colonial agents? Evidence from Africa

Abstract

NGOs have become involved in ecotourism because of its potential to balance economic development, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural revitalization. However, some critics have associated ecotourism with neo-colonialism and with the perpetuation of economic and political hegemonies because the concept has been advanced from the West . The present study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the merits of two opposing views – that NGOs facilitate and advance sustainable development or are agents of neo-colonialism. The researchers focus on a nation which was spared the experience of colonization – Ethiopia – to explore whether ecotourism practice can be accurately characterized as "neo-colonial". Through a close examination of NGO involvement in ecotourism, the authors challenge the widely held view that NGOs use sustainable development as a pretext to promote neo-colonial ideas. The paper contributes to theory and practice by explaining the relationship between neo-colonialism and ecotourism. Implications and opportunities for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Dependency; Ecotourism; Neo-colonialism; NGOs; Southern Ethiopia

1. Introduction

The relationship between ecotourism and neo-colonialism has been an enduring interest amongst tourism researchers (e.g. Aquino, 2019; Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Loperena, 2017; Mkono, 2019). Defined as a responsible journey to natural areas that aims to support environmental conservation, improve local well-being and educate tourists (The International Ecotourism Society, 2018), ecotourism has been closely associated with sustainable rural development, particularly in the developing nations (Eshun & Tagoe-Darko, 2015; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). Researchers have documented the ecotourism features that drive sustainable development, including its capacity to contribute to environmental conservation, while retaining authenticity (Jamaliah & Powell, 2018; Mbaiwa, 2015b; Mondino & Beery, 2018; Ruhanen, 2013). Stronza & Gordillo (2008) identified successful ecotourism development in South America, while Snyman (2014) and Tran & Walter (2014) have documented the benefits that ecotourism has delivered in Southern Africa and Vietnam respectively.

However, ecotourism has also been characterized and critiqued as being the product of a Western 'classical conservationist' paradigm, with its fundamental principles and assumptions rooted in Western cultural, economic and political ideologies. This serves as a challenge to the universal applicability of ecotourism (Devine, 2017; Devine & Ojeda, 2017;

Manyara & Jones, 2007). As noted by McKercher (2010), the term ecotourism first appeared publicly in a Parks Canada document in 1978. The agency used the term ecotourism to explain visitor enjoyment of natural resources and to demonstrate the inextricable link between nature and humankind (McKercher, 2010). This implies that the conceptual roots of ecotourism originated in Western conservation philosophy. While ecotourism seeks to achieve sustainable development by unlocking opportunities that generate alternative incomes, and encourage local community empowerment and participation (Bien, 2010; Butcher, 2011; Xu et al., 2014), other empirical studies have shown an alternative picture - that ecotourism development has facilitated the implantation of neo-colonial policies through expropriation and privatization of nature, culture and other community resources (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Devine, 2017; Ojeda, 2012; Loperena, 2017). Such practices are consistent with neo-colonialism, as they involve the imposition of externally conceived development policies and the systematic marginalization of communities from their resource ownership, thereby triggering deprivation and dependency (Janzer & Weinstein, 2014; Nkrumah, 1965).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been actively involved in ecotourism in various developing countries. Their roles include providing financial and technical support, drafting integrated development plans that include an ecotourism component, raising awareness, lobbying governments, assisting local community with projects and building community capacity (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Spenceley, 2008; Simpson, 2008a; Simpson, 2008b). However, critics have long accused the NGOs that operate in developing countries of being agents of neo-colonialism, especially in the case of those receiving overseas funding (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Easterly, 2008). The origin of funding is often contentious. In Russia, NGOs that are in receipt of overseas funding are classed as 'foreign agents', leading to a lack of funding which limits their capacity to deliver their mission (Dauce, 2015). From the preceding discussion, it is evident that NGOs may on the one hand drive sustainability by providing capacity building, capital or materials that enable local communities to improve their socio-cultural, economic and environmental dimensions, or represent neo-colonialism by imposing policies and practices that do not benefit local communities and/or the physical environment.

International development programs including UNWTO's Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (STEP), have been criticized for providing fertile ground for the progression of neo-colonialism under the guise of sustainable development assistance (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Duffy, 2008; Manyara & Jones, 2007). Other scholars have pointed to the

influences of NGOs as facilitators of neo-colonialism as a major reason why ecotourism has failed (Devine, 2017; Flectcher, 2017; Loperena, 2017). Despite the strong views expressed on either side of the argument, the links between ecotourism and neocolonialism have not been examined in the context of a never-colonized country. Given this gap, the current study offers a distinct and useful contribution to the literature. The researchers undertake an empirical examination of whether NGOs involved in ecotourism development are patrons of sustainable development or serve as agents of neo-colonialism. By addressing filling this gap in the literature, the current authors are able to provide a holistic understanding of if and how NGOs contribute to sustainable ecotourism in developing countries. The authors draw upon Nkrumah's (1965) theory of neo-colonialism and use a non-colonized developing country as the research setting. Specifically, the researchers aim to:

1) examine the NGO understandings of ecotourism in developing countries;

2) investigate the implementation of NGO values and principles through the medium of ecotourism;

3) examine NGO involvement in ecotourism including their approaches and contributions;

4) explore impediments to NGO contributions for ecotourism; and

5) propose means to overcome setbacks and enlarge NGO contributions to sustainable ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia.

2. Literature review

2.1 Neo-colonialism and its attributes

The liberation from formerly dominant European colonizers that followed World War II (WWII) was superseded by a wave of neo-colonialism across the developing world including in Sub-Saharan Africa. Numerous countries underwent structural adjustments that advanced neo-colonial agendas (Hanson & Hentz, 1999; Smith, 2010). Neo-colonialism extends previously dismantled colonial hegemonies and entitlements through international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Hanson & Hentz, 1999; Nega & Schneider, 2014; Wijesinghe, Mura & Bouchon, 2017). Janzer and Weinstein (2014, p.338) defined neo-colonialism as an 'influence over a population, community, or society in the absence of direct, obvious or formal control'. Nkrumah (1965, p.xi) characterized neo-colonialism as the worst form of imperialism since 'for those who practice it, it means power without responsibility, and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress'. According to Wijesinghe et al. (2017), neo-colonialism is a

practice where former colonizers or new emerging superpowers subtly impose their interests and enforce economic, political and cultural dominance. Similarly, Lassou and Hopper (2016) understood neo-colonialism as a modern manifestation of colonialism that occurs when colonial powers subtly control the political and economic institutions of former colonies with the intention of creating perpetual dependency. They adopt tactics such as an aid that does not aim to develop but to strengthen the infrastructure required for neo-colonial exploitation. Neo-colonialism allegedly employs a variety of methods such as paying the cost of running the state, infiltrating civil servants who occupy positions where they can dictate policies and imposing monetary control over a foreign exchange (Akama et al., 2011; Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Lassou & Hopper, 2016; Nkrumah, 1965). As noted by Devine and Ojeda (2017), Kline and Slocum (2015) and Ojeda (2012), neo-colonial agendas can be transported via NGOs on the pretext of sustainable development and conservation assistance. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictate developing nation domestic policies and serve as neo-colonial proxies by offering loans to local policies on condition of adjustment (Hanson & Hentz, 1999; Nega & Schneider, 2014; Wijesinghe et al., 2017). Neo-colonial ideas can be disseminated through policy-related activities such as technical advice, donations, loans and market negotiations (Financial Times, 2019; Hanson & Hentz, 1999).

In the operation of neo-colonial projects, foreign capital is deployed to exploit local economic wealth instead of advancing developing nations (Nkrumah, 1965). Neo-colonial investment projects are destined to increase dependency on overseas governments and organizations, rather than fostering self-reliance (Loperena, 2017; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Rudovsky, 2015; Southgate, 2006). Ecotourism development projects in Nepal and Kenya have been critiqued as being neo-colonial because communities have been manipulation and because ecotourism resources have been exploited by external operators, thereby increasing inequality and dependency (Chan & Bhatta, 2013; Ondicho, 2012; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Southgate, 2006). Similarly, Devine (2017), discussed how non-traditional tourism segments such as ecotourism and cultural tourism, set an auspicious stage for the spread of neo-colonial ideologies and reforms that expedite the practices of spatial colonization, land dispossession, and the commodification of culture and identity as objects of tourist consumption in Guatemala. Loperena (2017) also noted how neo-colonial policies have been implemented under the guise of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development while creating the

4

conditions for extractivism, natural resource expropriation, enclosure, and dispossession resulting in disparity, widespread environmental degradation, and ecological devastation.

Communities in developing countries have been denied access to material subsistence, through items such as land, water, food, timber and game on the basis that their expropriation is needed to conform with sustainable tourism principles (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Loperena, 2017; Ojeda, 2012; Rudovsky, 2015). With little bargaining power, few choices and a tourism sector that is driven by neo-colonial interests in exploiting resources, locals in developing countries are confined to lower-paying and often physically demanding tourism jobs, while jobs with more career oriented and meaningful roles are occupied by non-locals (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Ondicho, 2012; Southgate, 2006; Tolkach & King, 2015).

2.2 NGOs in developing countries

Various authors have documented the constructive roles of NGOs in addressing socio-economic and environmental problems in developing countries (Nega & Schneider, 2014; Vivian, 1994). Though they cannot replace the state, NGOs, charities and development agencies can play support roles in inducing positive change (Nega & Schneider, 2014; Smith, 2010). Some NGOs have advocated sustainable development practices that improve community livelihoods while conserving cultural heritage and natural habitats (Mukherji, 2018). In the case of Africa, there has been a substantial increase in the number and influence of NGOs since the 1980s (Hearn, 2007; Smith, 2010). The impetus has arisen from a push to reduce public expenditures by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. This forced indebted African states to open their doors to NGOs (Matthews, 2017). It also led to a mushrooming of nonprofit organizations throughout Africa (Ariti, van Vliet & Verburg, 2018; Matthews, 2017). In particular, the limited capacity of African governments to serve diverse community needs in remote rural areas or to manage natural ecosystems led to a proliferation of NGO activities (Ariti et al., 2018; Obiyan, 2005). NGO involvement in the delivery of environmental services has been a response to the incapacity of many post-colonial governments (Novelli, 2015).

Views are deeply polarized about the effectiveness of NGO engagements in multi-national corporate investment and bilateral/unilateral aid to developing countries (Burns, 1999; Fortanier & Van Wijk, 2010). Some authors have endorsed an integral role for NGOs as one of the fastest growing and influential forces for development (e.g. Burns, 1999; Halpenny, 2003; Makoba, 2002; Matthews, 2017; Stone, 2015; Trejos, Huang & Chiang, 2008; Zhuang, Lassoie & Wolf, 2011). However, others have questioned their real impacts on

development (Burns, 1999; Devine, 2017; Gardner, 2012; Hearn, 2007; Livernash, 1992; Ojeda, 2012; Smith, 2010). According to Burns (1999), NGOs work with and on behalf of the grassroots in developing nations. Similarly, Suresh, Babu, and Siva (1999) have characterized NGOs as being motivated to address contemporary societal challenges by differentiating their approaches from those of large, highly structured institutions such as governments. NGOs may also represent specific local and international interest groups across diverse programs ranging from poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, food production, capacity building and consulting on policy and planning issues (Burns, 1999; Kennedy & Dornan, 2009; Suresh et al., 1999). Their work can involve tangible short-term local projects or may have a broader and longer-term orientation, for example in nurturing awareness, training, social capital creation, and institutional development (Horochowski & Moisey, 1999; Stone, 2015; Suresh et al., 1999; Zhuang et al., 2011).

NGOs have also attracted criticism for being insufficiently representative or accountable to their intended beneficiaries - the poorest and most marginal (Trejos et al., 2008). They may focus excessively on shorter-term remedies than on dealing with underlying problems thereby compromising sovereignty and development prospects. Scholars have also critiqued the inadequate contributions of NGOs where the opportunities that they generate flow to elite community members and experts from the developed nations at the expense of the intended beneficiaries (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Matthews, 2017; Southgate, 2006). Such criticisms offer support for Nkrumah's (1965) neo-colonial argument. Scholars such as Hearn (2007), Livernash (1992), Manji and O'Coill (2002), Ojeda (2012) and Smith (2010) have claimed that NGOs contribute only marginally to poverty alleviation in developing countries, whilst simultaneously undermining their struggles against economic, social and political oppression and dependency. Furthermore, as suggested by Loperena (2017), Nega and Schneider (2014) and Smith (2010), NGOs may contribute negatively to the socio-economic development of developing countries by helping corrupt dictators to remain in power and by cultivating local corruption. Moreover, many developing country governments frustrate NGO efforts to reach the grassroots and to deliver what is expected, leading to ineffectiveness and susceptibility to failure (Ariti et al., 2018; Clark, 2000; Livernash, 1992; Mitlin, Hickey & Bebbington, 2007).

2.3 NGO engagements with ecotourism

Ecotourism in its current guise emerged as an alternative form of tourism development from around the 1980s. The term refers to a specific nature-based product niche that embraces

sustainability principles. These principles may be explained using the triple bottom-line idea (that embraces environmental, social and economic principles). Ecotourism progressively gained attention globally because it was strongly advocated by many academics, gradual acceptance by consumers and a dawning by industry of the destructive impacts of mass tourism. However, despite gaining greater international recognition, ecotourism is widely misunderstood, partly because there is no commonly used definition and also the lack of any precise measurement of its impacts (Tsaur et al., 2006; Buckley, 2009; Baral et al., 2012). This gap has allowed unethical players to misrepresent the concept and to engage in opportunistic 'green-washing'and. Furthermore, it has been difficult to provide an holistic measurement of the sustainability ideal since the economic impacts are typically observable in the shorter-term, while measuring the environmental and socio-cultural impacts requires more longitudinal investigations (Butler, 1999). Despite the challenges, NGOs are amongst the various stakeholders that have continued to advocate on behalf of ecotourism as an appropriate type of tourism.

Tourism-oriented NGOs are increasingly prevalent in developing countries as an alternative and supportive agent of development (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009; Zhuang et al., 2011). For instance, NGOs supported community-based rural tourism in Costa Rica through promotion and marketing, capacity building and technical assistance, and lobbied the political actors to make commitments to the sector (Trejos et al., 2008). Studies in Bangladesh by Hassan and Forhad (2013) and by Roy, Raquib, and Sarker (2017) suggest that NGOs have made a positive contribution to sustainable tourism development. Similarly, Stone (2015) credited NGOs as facilitators of ecotourism stakeholder collaboration in Botswana, which helped to organize and empower local communities and provide financial support.

As noted by Halpenny (2003), NGOs that operate in collaborative working environments and in a supportive political climate can contribute to urgently-needed frontiers of development such as finance and technical advisory services to local authorities, capacity building and ecotourism training. While NGOs such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), ActionAid and USAID function at a global level, others operate at regional, national and local scales. In practice, most of the NGOs operating in the developing world are relatively small and community-based (Livernash, 1992; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). Sustainable development and neo-colonialism are intricately interconnected because various loopholes are prevalent in developing countries and allow NGOs to use sustainable development as a pretext to realize "hidden" agendas , (Devine, 2017; Wijesinghe et al., 2017). In conclusion, whilst

there are divisions within the literature about the contribution of NGOs to sustainable development, the current study will undertake an empirical examination of whether NGOs in developing countries are patrons of sustainability or mediums of neo-colonialism.

3. Research context

Ethiopia is an East African country which has not experienced direct colonial rule. Its recent development of tourism has involved strong NGO involvement (Faseha, 2012; Frost & Shanka, 2002; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). It is unique in Africa for having retained indigenous values and remarkable cultural heritage for millennia (Mann, 2006; Mitchell & Coles, 2009). Unique features include its calendar, alphabet, language, cuisines and countless authentic festivals along with several historical, cultural and natural attractions (Feseha, 2012; Tegegne, Moyle & Becken, 2018).

There is a longstanding involvement of NGOs in Ethiopia dating back to the 1960s with the International Red Cross and Save the Children (Waktola, 1999). However, it was after the devastating 1984-1985 drought which triggered the country's worst ever famine, that prompted the rapid growth involvement by international NGOs (Waktola, 1999; Clark, 2000). At the time of writing, there are approximately 800 foreign NGOs and 2,800 domestic NGOs registered in Ethiopia (G5, January 2018). NGOs progressively redirected their efforts from relief to development as conditions across the country improved (Waktola, 1999). As these circumstances arose, international NGOs began to support the prospects of sustainable tourism for economic development (WTTC, 2018). The present study has been undertaken in the autonomous region of Southern Ethiopia. The region is bestowed with a range of cultural and natural resources and is a major corridor for ecotourism development (ETO, 2017; Wondirad, 2017). The region is also home to 56 tribes and is known for its diverse and exotic cultural and traditional assets (Wondirad, 2017).

4. Research method

The current research adopts a qualitative approach to examine the extent to which NGOs use ecotourism as a tool to extend neo-colonial ideologies. The study seeks to establish a deeper understanding of the nexus between ecotourism and neo-colonialism by examining NGO roles, values, and interests from the standpoint of key informants in the context of a non-colonized developing country (Maxwell, 2013). Data were gathered using in-depth interviews of 20 purposively selected key informants (5 participants each from NGOs, local communities, private ecotourism enterprises, and governmental institutions, see Table 1). It is believed that these respondents possess adequate experience and information about issues relating to the

research objectives (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Jennings, 2010). The researchers combined purposive and snowball participant recruitment techniques (Maxwell, 2013). The notion of theoretical saturation is considered to determine sample size where the researchers have stopped collecting more data once new information ceased to emerge (Charmaz, 2014; Mason, 2010). The researchers undertook in-depth interviewing with questions addressing issues such as NGO engagements in and contributions to ecotourism, the fundamental values of NGOs, cooperation between NGOs and other ecotourism stakeholders, and challenges facing NGOs when developing ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia. The guidelines for in-depth interviewing were generated from the existing literature and were adapted to the current research context over the course of various field visits by the researchers.

Data collection was undertaken from December 2017 through August 2018 and the researchers made multiple site visits, namely Hawassa, Arbaminch, and Konso with the aim of understanding the study areas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015; Grossoehme, 2014). The sites represent the tourism destinations with prime attractions and strategic locations along the Southern Ethiopia tourism route (ETO, 2017). This contrasts with the Northern historic route because of its fame for immense natural and exotic cultural attractions that are suited to ecotourism (Lonely Planet, 2016; Tamene & Wondirad, 2019; Young, 2012). Consent was sought and obtained from all study participants. The researchers provided assurance that respondent privacy would be respected, and that any information would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

In-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed for purposes of subsequent analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to develop theoretical frameworks as a form of grounded theory. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers deployed a variety of strategies including pilot testing, member checks, confirmability audits and thick description (Berg, 2007; Guba, 1990). After organizing, cleaning and polishing the relevant inputs, the researchers coded the filtered the associated data using QDA Miner qualitative data analysis software, version 5.0.20. Through the process, three types of coding were used (open, axial and selective), in line with the suggestions of Brotherton (2008), Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2015) and Merriam (2009) with a view to reaching ultimate abstraction and/or theorization. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, the researchers adopted measures to understand the research context by making frequent site visits and undertaking extended stays (Kebete & Wondirad, 2019).

Table 2. Background of interview participants

Participant No.	Participant category	Sex	Age	Participant location
1	Local community_L1	F	20-30	Hawassa
2	Local community_L2	M	41-50	Arbaminch
3	Local community_L3	M	50^+	Konso
4	Local community_L4	M	31-40	Hawassa
5	Local community_L5	F	31-40	Arbaminch
6	Government organization (EWCA)_G1	M	41-50	Arbaminch
7	Government organization (MoCT)_G2	M	41-50	Arbaminch
8	Government organization (MoFE)_G3	M	50+	Hawassa
9	Government organization (MoCT)_G4	M	31-40	Konso
10	Government organization (MoCT)_G5	M	31-40	Hawassa
11	Private ecotourism enterprise_P1	M	41-50	Hawassa
12	Private ecotourism enterprise_P2	F	20-30	Hawassa
13	Private ecotourism enterprise_P3	M	31-40	Arbaminch
14	Private ecotourism enterprise_P4	M	31-40	Konso
15	Private ecotourism enterprise_P5	M	31-40	Konso
16	NGO_N1	M	41-50	Arbaminch
17	NGO_N2	M	31-40	Konso
18	NGO_N3	M	50^+	Hawassa
19	NGO_N4	M	41-50	Arbaminch
20	NGO_N5	M	41-50	Konso

Note: Government Organization consisted of participants from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT); Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoFE).

5. Findings and discussions

5.1 Rationale for NGO involvement in ecotourism

Ecotourism has recently emerged as a preferred type of tourism development for NGOs operating within Ethiopia. They seek to facilitate local economic development through the sustainable utilization of natural and cultural resources. In this respect, NGOs see themselves as providers of support to the government and local communities in the development of sustainable ecotourism. Most NGO participants expressed their view that local communities, private ecotourism enterprises, and government institutions have limited understanding of ecotourism. However, NGOs themselves expressed inconsistent understandings of ecotourism. Some considered the consumptive use of natural resources, such as hunting as legitimate:

> We understand ecotourism as a branch of tourism interwoven with nature and
> biodiversity, which involves hunting and wildlife tourism. We believe that if

ecotourism is properly planned, developed and managed with comprehensive stakeholder participation, it can bring both economic and environmental benefits. (N1, May 2018).

Some researchers (e.g. Butler 1991; Fennell, 2001; Hoenegaard, 1994; Novelli, Barnes, & Humavindu, 2006) have observed that ecotourism may include the consumptive use of resources such as through hunting, in line with conservational policies and practices. The intention is to bring economic benefits that will improve the livelihood of communities. However, Mkono (2019) recently associated hunting and neo-colonialism since hunting schemes grant tourists more power and access to wildlife resources relative to locals. This leads to discontent towards hunting within the wider community since it is perceived as a (neo-colonial) practice that privileges Western elites to exploit native wildlife resources (Mkono, 2019). In this connection, one private sector representative (P5, March 2018) expressed concern that "communities who reside in the vicinity of national parks where wildlife hunting is practiced, are resentful since they believe that they are denied access to resources while the government permits hunting for tourists because tourists can pay money". This is consistent with the hostile relationship between protected areas and local communities in Southern Ethiopia that was observed by Yitbarek et al. (2013). As Yitbarek et al (2013) stated, the government of Ethiopia has benefited from a steady flow of revenues from national parks within the region, without implementing a fair and equitable benefit sharing scheme for the surrounding communities. Local communities, on the other hand, must tolerate costs such as restricted access and prohibitions on hunting and on using the land for agricultural and grazing practices (Yitbarek et al., 2013). Meanwhile, given the lifestyles of most indigenous tribes in the region, the contributions made via financial compensation may be perceived as unattractive, thereby making benefit sharing mechanisms difficult to implement. The instances where the local community has reduced access to natural resources for tourist benefit has neo-colonial overtones. This is despite the potential attribution of the problem to poor destination management by the respective federal, regional and local governments in Southern Ethiopia.

5.2 NGO values and ecotourism development principles

Well defined and established principles and values are critical to guide organizational operations effectively. In light of that, the current study examined what values and principles do NGOs have as a blueprint to plan and guide their mission in a more efficient manner. Given, every consequence is a byproduct of a certain action; crafting and embracing organizational values that carefully consider sustainability principles and promote collaboration, fairness, and

equity among stakeholders foster the development of sustainable ecotourism (Faux & Dwyer, 2009; Novelli, 2015). In the case of Southern Ethiopia, NGO respondents stated that despite several constraints which undermine efficiency, they seek to operate in line with sustainable development principles. As core elements of their organizational values, NGOs intend to:

1) Promote the development of environmentally and socio-culturally responsible and economically competitive ecotourism

2) Ensure community participation, empowerment and livelihood improvement, and

3) Promote stakeholder interaction as the following mission statement of an international NGO explains.

German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) envisions identifying ecologically threatened areas of Ethiopia and setting up economically productive projects through key stakeholder collaboration including active community participation to provide locals with complementary income to discourage deforestation and other environmentally destructive activities (N4, August 2018).

Guided by such principles, NGOs are contributing to the sustainable development of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia. Interestingly, 75% of the interviewees viewed NGOs as making a better contribution to sustainable development through ecotourism than local, regional and federal governments. One community representative (L5) stated that the Ethiopian government has not yet made any significant efforts to develop sustainable and competitive ecotourism in the region, apart from collecting income. To substantiate this view, the participant cited the absence of tourist information centers in major ecotourism destinations across Southern Ethiopia, despite ongoing visitor and community demand. Apart from the UNWTO-developed Konso tourist information center (see Figure 2), (in 2010) (UNWTO, 2017), no tourism information center has been established even in prime destinations such as Arbaminch and Hawassa.

A notable example of an NGO bottom-up, community-oriented tourism development approach (in contrast with neo-colonial approaches) was the benefit-sharing scheme developed and implemented in Konso by the UNWTO and Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (ESTA) in 2006. Though the agreement was ultimately violated by the government in 2012, leading to a series of massive public protests and destruction in Konso (Addis Standard, 2016; Dire Tube, 2016), during its existence it reconciled competing local

community and government institution interests through continuous dialogue and negotiations (Wondirad, 2018). As stated by one local community representative (L3, May 2018), based on this negotiation, 80% of the tourism revenue should be distributed within the local community with the remaining 20% being allocated for district administration.

Given the nascent state of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia, it is notable that some NGOs embrace the triple-bottom-line concept. Nevertheless, what matters most is whether such values are executed properly and consistently. This should involve working towards the creation of a stakeholder platform in which key actors participate to discuss issues of importance to them and to the ecotourism sector. One local community participant emphasized the following in the face of rapidly declining natural and cultural attractions in the region:

> In my opinion, most of the problems we are facing these days could have been tackled before getting worse. Given most of the challenges of ecotourism development in our area are quite interrelated, a sustained discussion among key stakeholders is very crucial. If some of the actors play a positive role while others are deconstructing, change can never be realized (L4, July 2018).

Halpenny (2003) and Zhuang et al. (2011) noted that the success of NGO initiated projects depends on an enabling and supporting environment, the mobilization of adequate resources and openness to work in collaboration with communities, policy makers, authorities and the private sector. Other researchers have identified that it will be worth establishing platforms for continuous discussion between stakeholders to clarify any issues and ultimately to reach common ground (Bramwell, 2011; Weaver, 2006). It has been observed that the best prospects for NGOs to play a constructive role in ecotourism in developing countries is when they are properly monitored and are supported by other stakeholders through ongoing discussions with various levels of government, the private sector, and local communities, (Halpenny, 2003; Xu et al., 2014; Zhuang et al., 2011). Successive rounds of discussion amongst stakeholders can help to clear up potential misunderstandings and to build trust for the purposes of further ecotourism collaborations and partnerships. This would potentially address a current challenge facing the development of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Stone, 2015; Waayers et al., 2012)

5.3 NGO cooperation with other stakeholders

The findings have noted an absence of effective and consistent NGO cooperation with other stakeholders, particularly governments. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) has been identified by foreign NGO participants as the weakest and less responsible in the

country. One foreign NGO participant shared the following feelings, which were widely representative:

> Despite our effort to help and provide technical support, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is not proactive and not keenly responsible for our calls. Local communities tend to be open for help but there are communication and cultural barriers between us. Therefore, there is a missing link between us and the communities. Consequently, we feel that we have not contributed to the sustainable development of ecotourism as much as we want to do (N2, July 2018).

As was explained by one private tour guide (P1, June 2018), it has been challenging for communities in Southern Ethiopia to communicate, work, and cooperate directly with international NGOs, due to low literacy rates within most ethnic tribes. Furthermore, inadequate local cultural knowledge amongst NGOs has led to poor understanding between communities and NGOs, which in turn precludes the development of trust (Mkono, 2019). As noted by Nega and Milofsky (2011), local dialogue, trust, and shared decision-making are essential to carry out effective projects locally. One might also argue that in addition to limiting NGO contributions to sustainable ecotourism development, the vacuum created due to poor governance, lack of capacity and inadequate follow-up might serve as a loophole in which NGOs can easily instill neo-colonial ideologies onto local communities.

The current NGO interactions with private ecotourism institutions are selective and seasonal. The primary opportunities for communication and cooperation between NGOs and the private sector are capacity building, training, and workshops though these are rarely NGO organized. As was noted by one private sector participant (P3, April 2018), "Once such workshops are completed, everything goes back to business as usual and through time those parties fail even to recall major issues discussed." This suggests that the existing interactions between NGOs and other ecotourism stakeholders in Southern Ethiopia is unsteady and sporadic and lacks a clear roadmap and commitment (Italemahu, 2015; Wondirad, 2017). The lack of effective collaboration is mainly attributable to the absence of a responsible organ to advance initiatives and offer leadership in facilitating such partnership endeavors at the grassroots level. As was implied by various research participants, there is a need for continuous progress using different techniques. The following excerpt from a private sector participant exemplifies a popularly held view.

Given ecotourism is relatively a recent phenomenon in the region, it did not yet come to the stockholders' attention as it should have. Subsequently, collaborative efforts that aim to ensure sustainable ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia are limited. The existing stakeholder relationships and collaborations are more informal, seasonal and inconsistent (P2, February 2018).

It is evident that care is needed in situations where collaboration and understanding between NGOs and other stakeholders are lacking. There is a risk that NGO activities could become a tool to promote neo-colonial style development, rather than advancing genuine bottom-up developments by empowering local communities, valuing indigenous knowledge and protecting the natural environment (Janzer & Weinstein, 2014).

5.4 Participation and contributions of NGOs in Southern Ethiopian ecotourism development

A range of domestic and international NGOs currently support sustainable ecotourism developments. There are eight international NGOs and one domestic NGO operating in Southern Ethiopia (see Table 2). These NGOs support tourism-related infrastructure and facility development, promote local community empowerment, and provide technical support in areas such as land use planning, protected area management, and integrated destination marketing and promotion (Barkin & Bouchez, 2002; Jepson, 2005; Novelli, 2015; Simpson, 2008a, 2008b). Moreover, NGOs promote the practice of environmental and ecosystem conservation and advocate stakeholder collaboration to stimulate sustainable ecotourism development in the region.

Table 1. NGOs supporting ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia

No.	NGO's name	Areas of contribution
1	German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)	Financial and technical support (park management plan) as well as capacity building to aid conservation effort, enhance management effectiveness and assisting in marketing protected areas in Southern Ethiopia (e.g. Nechisar National Park and Chebera Churchura National Park).
2	Sustainable Tourism Based on Natural Resource Management with Gender Balance Towards Women (STRONGBOW)	Financial support to research projects and continuous professional development in higher education institutions found in the region (Hawassa University and Arbaminch University)
3	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development	Financial and technical support to research projects and professional development pertaining to ecotourism and natural resource management in

		Southern Ethiopian Universities including Hawassa University.
4	United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	Financial and technical support towards community-based ecotourism projects (e.g. Dorze village in Arbaminch and Konso)
5	SNV Netherlands Development Organization	Financial and technical support (e.g. Konso Community Tourism Project)
6	Linden Trust for Conservation	Financial and technical support (e.g. Nechisar National Park, Arbaminch)
7	Ethiopian Sustainable Tourism Alliance (ESTA)	Financial and technical support (e.g. community-based ecotourism projects in Central and Southern Rift Valleys)
8	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Financial and technical support (e.g. community-based ecotourism projects in Central and Southern Rift Valleys)
9	Konso Development Association (KDA)	Local infrastructural development, capacity building and empowerment of communities and advocates community participation in any development in Konso including tourism/ecotourism plus financial and technical support

Generated from in-depth interviews

Figure 1 depicts some of the facilities that have been established in Nechisar National Park through NGO financial and technical support (a 5 km paved entrance way to the national park, and a harbor with visitor facilities). Moreover, a speed boat was donated to the national park management for patrolling purposes. As was stated by a participant from the government institutions (G1, January 2018), the donation of speedboats has been instrumental in preventing rampant illegal fishing in Lake Chamo, part of Nechisar National Park. UNWTO has built Konso tourist information center and designed a website to promote the cultural landscape and associated attractions in Konso (see Figure 2). The same organization also trained locals as tour guides and provided financial and technical support to community-based ecotourism projects in Dorze Village, Arbaminch. The NGOs' support in Konso, in particular, brought remarkable outcomes from a sustainable ecotourism development perspective.

Before 2006, international tourist arrivals to Konso were below 2,000 a year (UNWTO, 2017). However, following the inauguration of the STEP project, known as Konso Community Tourism Project, which was implemented by Konso Special District with additional technical support from SNV Ethiopia, international tourist arrivals increased by over 100 percent in three years (from 1,833 in 2006 to 4,354 in 2009). As is demonstrated in recent tourist arrival records obtained from Konso tourist information center, visitor arrivals have been growing rapidly – some 16,596 international tourists visited Konso Cultural Landscape in 2015.

Another exemplary NGO achievement in Southern Ethiopia is the community-based ecotourism project outcomes of USAID in partnership with ESTA in Central and Southern Rift Valleys, which created additional income to 40,000 community members whilst preserving the cultural heritage and the natural environment (Brookland, 2013). Moreover, the project conducted community capacity building through training and financial support, marketing, and promotion as well as supported the establishment of a local community association (Brookland, 2013). Furthermore, a project known as STRONGBOW has been working towards capacity building in higher education institutions in Southern Ethiopia, focusing on natural resource management, sustainable ecotourism development and other cross-cutting socio-cultural issues such as gender equality and women empowerment.

Investigations of other developing countries have reached similar outcomes about the role of NGOs in sustainable ecotourism development (Barkin & Bouchez, 2002; Halpenny, 2003; Zhuang et al., 2011). A study by Zhuang *et al.* (2011) in China also discussed the imperative roles of NGOs in sustainable ecotourism development. The authors observed that NGOs have played a coordination role across key ecotourism stakeholders and have mobilized the resources that are necessary for conservation and development. Similarly, an empirical study in Mexico evidenced that a local NGO has successfully developed ecotourism by facilitating community participation and promoting the interaction of groups from different cultural backgrounds and social classes where competing interests of stakeholders were appropriately reconciled (Barkin & Bouchez, 2002). By examining six international cases, Halpenny (2003) substantiated robust NGO contributions where they played crucial roles in conserving natural and cultural resources by providing financial support and technical expertise to local authorities, conducting research on challenges of resource conservation and providing training to ecotourism stakeholders such as communities and the private sector. It is apparent that where NGOs are properly monitored and are provided with necessary support from stakeholders such as the government, NGOs can be decisive in developing sustainable ecotourism. In this respect, the Government of Ethiopia has enforced a regulation about budget allocations, as is underlined in the following extract from an NGO coordinator.

> The contribution of NGOs towards sustainable ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia is generally appreciable. Most of the time NGOs conduct projects such as watershed management, protected area management, and land use planning, as well as community awareness campaigns. Moreover, they support infrastructural and facility development efforts in and around protected

areas. In consultation with park offices, they also identify the ecotourism resource base, facility requirements and challenges related to illegal settlements, deforestation, and unauthorized fishing to improve the region's protected areas condition and thereby boost the ecotourism sector. However, due to lack of proper support and facilitation, we failed to fully exploit what NGOs could deliver. There is also a culture of corruption within the NGOs themselves. To rectify this concern, the Ethiopian government has ratified the 70/30 regulation regarding NGOs' budget allocation. Accordingly, 70% of the NGOs' budget should be allocated to their respective projects, while they can use up to 30% of their budget to cover administrative expenses (N4, January 2018).

Figure 1. Facilities (solar power source and visitor ticket office) developed by NGOs at Nechisar National Park

Figure 2. Konso tourist information center built by UNWTO

NGOs have contributed towards the sustainable development of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia in several ways, namely through: (1) providing financial assistance to support tourism infrastructural and facility development, (2) empowering local communities, (3) increasing public awareness about environmental conservation and sustainability, (4) advocating a steadfast ecotourism stakeholder collaboration, and (5) providing technical

expertise to assist the formulation of protected area management plans and the marketing and promotion of ecotourism products. However, NGOs have some weaknesses that deserve attention for their future success (see Table 3).

Table 3. Strengths (achievements) and weaknesses of NGOs in Southern Ethiopian ecotourism

Achievements	Weaknesses
— Capacity building, community empowerment, as well as sustainable destination development and marketing — Technical and financial support to community-based ecotourism projects — Facilitation of ecotourism stakeholder discussion forums in a couple of sites in Southern Ethiopia such as Arbaminch and Konso to foster mutual understanding — Technical advice and financial contributions in infrastructural development around protected areas to make national parks more attractive — Absence of any land grab practice or expropriation of community resources on the pretexts of 'greener' development	— Lack of sound local knowledge — Lack of well-planned exit strategies — Internal corruption and misuse of funds — Limitations in scaling-up best practices

Generated from in-depth interviews

5.5 Challenges affecting NGO contributions to ecotourism

NGOs in Southern Ethiopia are currently facing acute challenges in developing sustainable ecotourism. One concerns a restrictive working environment since the government often perceives them as agents of foreign interests (Bekele, Hopkins & Noble, 2009; Halpenny, 2003; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). International powers such as the European Union and the USA have strategic interests in Ethiopia, a result of the country's geographic location in a politically turbulent region of East Africa adjoining Somalia. The latter country has experienced unremitting civil war and political turmoil over two decades and is a breeding ground for religious extremism, terrorism and regional instability (Dagne, 2002; Samatar, 2007; Shinn, 2004). In this regional context, Ethiopia is considered as one of the West's most dependable regional allies, especially against terrorism. However, the government of Ethiopia has been accused of human rights violations and of being totalitarian. Such allegations have usually been exposed by non-governmental organizations (Bekele et al., 2009; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). This has prompted the Ethiopian government to be suspicious of NGOs and rarely views them positively (Ariti et al., 2018; Clark, 2000; Nega & Milofsky, 2011).

According to Clark (2000), Bekele *et al.* (2009) and Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash (2015), the government views NGOs in Ethiopia as political opponents rather than as development partners. The Ethiopian government monitors domestic and foreign NGOs closely. A severe Civil Societies' (CSOs) Law was introduced in 2009 (Bekele et al., 2009; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). Various research participants mentioned the government attitude, for example:

> We have constraints in terms of obtaining the required support from the government, both federal to local. We also do not exactly know our jurisdiction in view of the 2009 Civil Societies (CSOs) law. This law is delicate enough to be interpreted differently by the government, which in turn, might cause undesirable consequences. As a result, our movements and interactions with other ecotourism stakeholders including the private sector and local communities are carefully designed and quite limited (N5, April 2018).

As mentioned by Nega and Milofsky (2011), the 2009 CSOs law was intended to regulate NGO activities and has been denounced as restrictive and as violating basic freedoms of association that are enshrined in the country's constitution and other international human rights obligations. The 2009 CSOs law has been described as the most restrictive of all laws passed by any country in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ariti et al., 2018; Bekele *et al.*, 2009; Dupuy, Ron, & Prakash, 2015). The law prohibits NGOs from participating in any activity pertaining to human rights, women rights, children rights, citizenship rights, conflict resolution and

policy and governance issues (Bekele *et al.*, 2009; Dupuy *et al.*, 2015). As a result, NGOs have no scope to engage in policy issues in Ethiopia (Ariti et al., 2018; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). That may explain why NGOs have described themselves as supportive stakeholders of ecotourism development in the current study, rather than as key actors. According to the 2009 CSOs law, even local NGOs must abstain from such duties if they receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources (Bekele *et al.*, 2009; Dupuy *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, NGOs currently obtain insufficient support from the Ethiopian government. They are also restricted and censored, which compromises their performance given that ecotourism involves a range of issues which are prohibited by the 2009 CSOs law, including politics, governance and community rights. Moreover, the management of many protected areas, such as Nechisar National Park, raises many concerns since the federal government continues to administer the park using a centralized top-down management style, inconsistent with the core principles of ecotourism. Despite NGO opposition to this management philosophy, research participants implied that they have neither advised nor corrected the government for fear of reprisals.

NGOs have also been impeded by financial instability and poor inter-sectoral linkages. Additional challenges stem from inadequate qualified personnel, weak institutional capacity and a lack of proper takeover and continuation of projects. These result in projects being short-term and unsustainable over the longer term. Anticipated deliverables have also been impeded by government corruption and even by corruption within the NGOs themselves (Smith, 2010; Wheeller, 2005). The problem has been reported by the World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report (2016–2017) authored by Schwab (2016) which identified corruption as the number one challenge of doing business in Ethiopia. Most development aid needs to pass through government officials for approval and is highly exposed to corruption and misuse (Asmare, 2016; Hassan, 2013; Mkono, 2019; Smith, 2010). The following NGO research participant outlined the challenges confronting NGOs as follows:

> Administrative issues (unnecessary bureaucracy), perception problem, lack of well-trained human power with strong local knowledge, low level of community awareness, and lack of administrative support are our chronic challenges. Moreover, challenges such as lack of skilled manpower, image problem (the government does not trust NGOs and as a result, it formulated the 2009 CSOs law, which restricts activities of NGOs), and lack of adequately prepared stakeholder to takeover projects are setbacks that limit our effort to

support the sustainable ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia (N2, April 2018).

NGO efforts in other developing countries have also been compromised by corruption, poor governance and lack of well-studied exit plans (Mkono, 2019; Smith, 2010). Ahebwa, Duim, and Sandbrook (2012) revealed that in Uganda the compensation for the costs of environmental conservation to local communities is commonly embezzled by corrupt officials. As noted by Smith (2010), in Nigeria, it is normal to associate NGOs with fraud, deceit, and corruption. Corruption also has a significant impact on wildlife management in Africa. Hunting concessions for wildlife management permit are commonly administered through officers by bribery (Mkono, 2019). Due to the previously mentioned factors, the contributions that NGOs have made towards sustainable ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia have been significantly constrained. If these setbacks were tackled, more significant positive impacts could have been made on ecosystem conservation, ecotourism product development, social capital creation, community empowerment, and participation, leading to sustainable ecotourism development.

As has been frequently mentioned in the literature, international NGOs that are funded from the developed economies are alleged to prioritize the concerns of their financers, thereby infusing neo-colonial doctrines (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Dixey, 2008; Easterly, 2008; Halpenny, 2003; Xu *et al.*, 2014). However, when Nkrumah's (1965) theory of neo-colonialism is considered, the current study has not found little concrete evidence in Southern Ethiopia. Instead, NGOs have achieved notable ecotourism development in the region, despite facing massive challenges. As is exemplified by the following statement from a local community representative, NGO efforts are being recognized by many local governments, private ecotourism enterprises, and local communities alike:

> Particularly, NGOs such as the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) came to help the ecotourism development in a new approach. They first try to understand the interests of various stakeholders including local fishers, local boat-renting associations, local guide associations, pastoralists, governmental institutions, and local communities. Several discussion platforms were organized by GIZ to understand stakeholders' respective interest before embarking on any kind of ecotourism development (L2, May 2018).

Southern Ethiopia exemplifies a very different picture from what has been presented in the literature where NGOs frequently facilitate neo-colonial activities under the pretext of

sustainable ecotourism development. Researchers have documented numerous cases from across the globe in reaching this conclusion (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Loperena, 2017; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Mkono, 2019),. This may be attributable to the stringent rules and regulations for NGO adherence. Close monitoring by government means that there is minimal prospect of embedding donor interests. As was widely noted by NGO participants in the study, their efforts to develop ecotourism and to help local communities are sometimes viewed with suspicion. Furthermore, NGOs that support ecotourism in Ethiopia benefit from the guidance and support that is provided by the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). This may support their effectiveness, given their unfamiliarity with the local context and minimal trust from communities. EWCA is an autonomous public agency of the federal government that is accountable to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) with the jurisdiction of planning, developing, and managing major national parks in the country (EWCA Establishment Proclamation, 2008). NGOs are particularly involved in supporting the planning, development and marketing of national parks in the country, notably in the case of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). On top of the aforementioned causes, the current substantial contribution of NGOs to ecotourism may not accurately reflect their extraordinary work. Rather it may highlight the weaknesses of other sub-regional stakeholders such as the government and private sector. As researchers have recently shown, a lack of government accountability has exacerbated environmental degradation in Southern Ethiopia (Ethiopian Reporter, 2016; Wondirad, 2017). The previous Prime Minister of Ethiopia made the admission by attributing blame to regional political leaders for the loss of unique wildlife resources, which they had pledged to protect and conserve (Ethiopian Reporter, 2016). Ultimately, since the development of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia is relatively new and NGOs have focused more on providing basic infrastructure and development activities, there are few opportunities to spread foreign ideologies under the guise of ecotourism. Nevertheless, it is equally important to acknowledge that the region's desperate need for socio-economic development and inadequate resources may lead to the acceptance of any development model that functions in the short-run at the expense of longer-term sustainable development. Developing countries often welcome any ecotourism development model for the sake of financial benefits, overlooking longer-term environmental and socio-cultural sustainability (de Hass, 2002; Ruhanen, 2013; Scheyvens, 1999). A government participant in the study reflected on this issue as follows:

Disagreement exists between park development professionals and politicians regarding which development model to follow. Professionals often advocate the development of infrastructure and facilities that properly support visitors along with ensuring ecosystem and environment rehabilitation followed by marketing to visitors, whereas officials promote the development and marketing of ecotourism resources alongside due to its short-term economic returns (G1, May 2018).

The quotation confirms Mkono's (2019) view that when it comes to spreading neo-colonial ideologies, it is unfair to pin the blame exclusively on Westerners seeking to exploit the economic desperation of Africa. Money-hungry African politicians who lack moral values are equally responsible. The current study findings diverge from the existing literature by revealing that NGOs sometimes do a better job than government and the private sectors in contributing to ecotourism in developing countries. The current study findings challenge some of the previous literature, by providing additional empirical verification to demonstrate a more positive and active contribution.

6. Conclusion and implications for future research

Though ecotourism has been hailed as a form of tourism that promotes ethical consumption and sustainable practices, it has also been suspect for its neo-colonial connotations (Figueroa & Waitt, 2011). If developing countries are to harness the prospective opportunities of ecotourism, they need to muster a range of support. When such support is sourced from within the developed world, it will usually emanate through NGOs that are attempting to tackle problems such as poverty, unemployment, and environmental conservation (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). According to Liverman and Vilas (2006) NGO work in development and conservation has generated mixed results Nevertheless, in the context of southern Ethiopia, the current research has not detected any efforts at spreading neo-colonial agendas or practices featuring the expropriation of land or other resources on the pretext of pursuing 'greener' projects, marking a contrast with previous research (Devine & Ojeda, 2017; Duffy, 2008; Easterly, 2008; Kline & Slocum, 2015; Loperena, 2017; Ojeda, 2012). The current researchers have found NGOs to be supportive of environmental conservation, tourist facility development, and local community empowerment and participation. Relative to the other actors involved in ecotourism in the region, NGOs appeared to be the most supportive of sustainable development. There are several contributing factors. Firstly, NGOs are treated by the Ethiopian government with suspicion and their activities are subject to strict regulation.

Secondly, ecotourism in Ethiopia is in its infancy and has grown only modestly. At this stage of development, NGO activities are rather basic and focus on spreading awareness about ecotourism and undertaking infrastructure work to improve the physical environment. Lastly, an Ethiopian organization (EWCA) consults NGOs regarding local context and appropriate activities. The potential contributions of NGOs to the sustainable development of ecotourism in Southern Ethiopia would have been more meaningful if not for the various aforementioned constraints.

Despite the provision of significant NGO contributions to ecotourism development, an urgent strengthening of collaborative working environments is needed, along with the establishment of linkages with local officials, experts, and communities. Since most international NGOs working in Africa have limited local know-how, necessary support includes proper local orientation prior to the start of any new projects (Garland, 2008; Novelli, 2015). In particular, the government should work closely with NGOs during the closing phases of ecotourism projects to ensure a proper handover to local communities. Frequent inspections should also be executed to confirm whether NGO funds are being appropriately allocated and utilized in accordance with the law, and corrective measures need to be taken in cases of noncompliance. NGOs should design and plan their exit strategy well in advance by training and empowering local communities, as well as strengthening local institutional capacities to transfer ecotourism projects (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Spenceley, 2008). Furthermore, as pointed out by research participants and discussed in the literature, the absence of uniform metrics to measure the success of NGO efforts in poverty reduction, environmental conservation, and community outreach complicates efforts to ascertain their precise contribution (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009; Suresh et al., 1999). In this regard clearly outlining standards and benchmarks is instrumental to quantify NGO accomplishments and vice versa in concrete terms. Above all, the 2009 preventive CSOs law should be amended to create a conducive working environment in a way that does not compromise national sovereignty and internal security.

While the exact roles and contributions of NGOs in ensuring sustainable development using ecotourism as an instrument are still contestable, the current study suggests that NGOs should focus more on tackling the root causes of the challenge of ecotourism development, instead of depending on short-term "handouts". Failure to do so will undermine the ecotourism fundamentals of ensuring long-term economic development and environmental conservation. By exploring the critical roles of NGOs in the sustainable ecotourism development from a

unique study context, the current study has offered substantive theoretical contributions and practical implications to the ongoing discussion of neo-colonialism and ecotourism literature. The researchers have argued that although endemic challenges require domestic solutions that are crafted to fix the underlying causes of socio-economic development problems, foreign NGOs that are properly guided, supported and themed can be crucial allies in tackling such issues. Future researchers might investigate the origin of community suspicions towards NGOs in developing countries. Moreover, further empirical studies can explore how the modern scientific knowledge that is advocated by NGOs can be better integrated with antique indigenous knowledge so that the foundations of ecotourism can be strengthened.

References

Addis Standard (2016). Commentary – what was troubling Konso? Retrieved 2018.02.10 from http://addisstandard.com/commentary-what-was-troubling-konso/.

Ahebwa, W. M., van der Duim, R., & Sandbrook, C. (2012). Tourism revenue sharing policy at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda: a policy arrangements approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *20*(3), 377-394.

Akama, J. S., Maingi, S., & Camargo, B. A. (2011). Wildlife conservation, safari tourism and the role of tourism certification in Kenya: A postcolonial critique. *Tourism Recreation Research, 36*(3), 281–291.

Antwi-Boateng, O. (2017). New world order neo-colonialism: A contextual comparison of contemporary China and European colonization in Africa. *Journal of Pan African Studies, 10*(2), 177-195.

Aquino, R. S. (2019). Towards decolonising tourism and hospitality research in the Philippines. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 31*, 72-84.

Ariti, A. T., van Vliet, J., & Verburg, P. H. (2018). What restrains Ethiopian NGOs to participate in the development of policies for natural resource management?. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *89*, 292-299.

Asmare, B. A. (2016). Pitfalls of tourism development in Ethiopia: the case of Bahir Dar town and its surroundings. *Korean Social Science Journal*, 1-14.

Barkin, D., & Bouchez, C. P. (2002). NGO–community collaboration for ecotourism: A strategy for sustainable regional development. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *5*(3-4), 245-253.

Bekele, Y., Hopkins, C. & Noble, L. (2009). Sounding the Horn: Ethiopia's Civil Society Law threatens human rights defenders. Retrieved 2018. 06. 25 from https://www.law.northwestern.edu/legalclinic/humanrights/documents/EthiopiaCSOPaper-Nov2009.pdf.

Berg, B.L. (2007). Qualitative methods for the social sciences (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bernard, H.R., & Ryan, G.W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, Inc.

Bien, A. (2010). Bridging the gap between policies and the field in sustainable tourism through new international networks. Retrieved 2019.02.28 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de55JjVZVS8.

Bramwell, B. (2011). Governance, the state and sustainable tourism: A political economy approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 19*(4-5), 459-477.

Brookland, J. (2013). Community ecotourism destinations open in Ethiopia's Central and Southern Rift Valleys. Retrieved 2018.10.17 from http://www.counterpart.org/community-ecotourism-destinations-open-in-ethiopias-central-and-southern-ri/.

Brotherton, B. (2008). Researching hospitality and tourism: A student guide. London, UK: Sage.

Burns, P. (1999). Tourism NGOs. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *24*(2), 3-6

Büscher, B., & Fletcher, R. (2017). Destructive creation: Capital accumulation and the structural violence of tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 25*(5), 651-667.

Butcher, J. (2011). Can ecotourism contribute to tackling poverty? The importance of 'symbiosis'. *Current Issues in Tourism, 14*(3), 295-307.

Butler, R. (1991). Tourism, Environment, and sustainable development. *Environmental Conservation, 18*(3), 201–209.

Cater, E. (2006). Ecotourism as a western construct. *Journal of Ecotourism, 5*(1-2), 23-39.

Chan, R. & Bhatta, K. (2013). Ecotourism Planning and Sustainable Community Development: Theoretical Perspectives for Nepal. *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage, 6*(1), 69-96.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clark, J. (2000). *Civil society, NGOs, and development in Ethiopia. A snapshot view.* NGO and Civil Society Unit Social Development Department the World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Cook, N. J., Wright, G. D., & Andersson, K. P. (2017). Local politics of forest governance: why NGO support can reduce local government responsiveness. *World Development, 92*, 203-214.

Dagne, T. S. (2002). Africa and the war on terrorism: The case of Somalia. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, *13*(4), 62-73.

Devine, J. A. (2017). Colonizing space and commodifying place: tourism's violent geographies. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *25*(5), 634-650.

Devine, J., & Ojeda, D. (2017). Violence and dispossession in tourism development: a critical geographical approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *25*(5), 605-617.

Dire Tube (2016). Ethiopia - Unrest in Konso Region lead the local heritage to ashes. Retrieved 2018.01.26 from https://www.diretube.com/ethiopia-unrest-in-konso-region-lead-the-local-heritage-to-ashes-sep-15-2016_d13818461.html.

Dixey, L. M. (2008). The Unsustainability of Community Tourism Donor Projects: Lessons from Zambia. In A. Spenceley (Eds.), *Responsible Tourism Critical Issues for Conservation and Development* (pp. 325-343). Earthscan, UK.

Duffy, R. (2008). Neoliberalising nature: global networks and ecotourism development in Madagascar. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *16*(3), 327-344.

Dupuy, K. E., Ron, J., & Prakash, A. (2015). Who survived? Ethiopia's regulatory crackdown on foreign-funded NGOs. *Review of International Political Economy, 22*(2), 419-456.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P.R. (2015). *Management and business research*. (5th Eds.), London: Sage Publications.

Eshun, G., & Tagoe-Darko, E. (2015). Ecotourism development in Ghana: A postcolonial analysis. *Development Southern Africa, 32*(3), 392-406.

Ethiopian Reporter (2016). PM Hailemariam Dessalegne blamed regional and local authorities for the destruction of national parks in the country (translation). Retrieved 2018.08.11 from https://www.ethiopianreporter.com/index.php/content/%E1%8C%A0%E1%89%85%E1%88%8B%E1%8B%AD.

Ethiopian Tourism Organization (2017). *Great Ethiopian Routes*. Retrieved 2018.11.13 from http://www.ethiopia.travel/destinations/ethiopian-routes.

EWCA Establishment Proclamation (2008). A proclamation to provide for the establishment of the Ethiopian wildlife development and conservation authority. Retrieved 2019.03.16 from https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/proc-575-ethiopian-wildlife-develop.pdf.

Faux, J., & Dwyer, L. (2009). Triple bottom line reporting of tourism organizations to support sustainable development. *BEST Education Network Module, 1-47*.

Fennell, D. A. (2001). A content analysis of ecotourism definitions. *Current Issues in Tourism, 4*(5), 403-421.

Feseha, M. (2012). *Fundamentals of community-based ecotourism development in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Eclipse Printing and Graphics.

Figueroa, R. M., & Waitt, G. (2011). The moral terrains of ecotourism and the ethics of consumption. In *Ethical Consumption* (Vol. 260, No. 274, pp. 260-274). ROUTLEDGE in association with GSE Research.

Financial Times (2019). *Neo-liberalism is neo-colonialism in disguise*. Retrieved 09.02.2019 from http://www.sundaytimes.lk/051023/ft/9.html.

Fortanier, F., & Van Wijk, J. (2010). Sustainable tourism industry development in sub-Saharan Africa: Consequences of foreign hotels for local employment. *International Business Review*, *19*(2), 191-205.

Frost, F. A., & Shanka, T. (2002). Regionalism in tourism-The case for Kenya and Ethiopia. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 11*(1), 35-58.

Gardner, B. (2012). Tourism and the politics of the global land grab in Tanzania: markets, appropriation and recognition. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *39*(2), 377-402.

Garland, E. (2008). The elephant in the room: Confronting the colonial character of wildlife conservation in Africa. *African Studies Review, 51*(03), 51–74.

Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of qualitative research. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy, 20*(3), 109-122.

Guba, E. G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E. G. Guba (Eds.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 17–27). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Halpenny, E. A. (2003). NGOs as Conservation Agents: Achieving Conservation through Marine Ecotourism. In B. Garrod, & J. C. Wilson (Eds.), *Marine ecotourism: issues and experiences* (pp. 107-120). Channel View Publication.

Hanson, M., & Hentz, J. J. (1999). Neocolonialism and neoliberalism in South Africa and Zambia. *Political Science Quarterly*, *114*(3), 479-502.

Hassan, A., & Forhad, A. (2013). The role of NGOs in the sustainable development in Bangladesh. *Present Environment & Sustainable Development*, *7*(2).

Hassan, S. Y. (2013). Aid, Predation and State Capture: The Role of Development Aid in Fueling Corruption and Undermining Governance: The Case of Ethiopia. *Available at SSRN 2303716*.

Hearn, J. (2007). African NGOs: the new compradors?. *Development and Change*, *38*(6), 1095-1110.

Hoenegaard, G. (1994). Ecotourism: A status report and conceptual framework. *Journal of Tourism Studies, 5*(2), 24–35.

Horochowski, K., & Moisey, R. N. (1999). The role of environmental NGOs in sustainable tourism development: a case study in northern Honduras. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *24*(2), 19-30.

Human Rights Watch (2009). *Ethiopia: New Law Ratchets up Repression.* Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/01/08/ethiopia-new-law-ratchets-repression.

Italemahu, T. Z. (2015). *Interaction, institutions and impacts of tourism on the Bishoftu-Modjo-Hawassa route, Central Ethiopia* (Doctoral Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa). Retrieved 2018.03.25 from http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/handle/123456789/978/Tesfaye%20Zeleke%20Italemahu.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Jamal, T. B., & Getz, D. (1995). Collaboration Theory and Community Tourism Planning. *Annals of Tourism Research, 22*(1), 186-204.

Jamaliah, M. M., & Powell, R. B. (2018). Ecotourism resilience to climate change in Dana Biosphere Reserve, Jordan. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 26*(4), 519-536.

Janzer, C. L., & Weinstein, L. S. (2014). Social design and neocolonialism. *Design and Culture*, *6*(3), 327-343.

Jepson, P. (2005). Governance and accountability of environmental NGOs. *Environmental Science and Policy, 8*, 515–524.

Kebete, Y., & Wondirad, A. (2019). Visitor management and sustainable destination management nexus in Zegie Peninsula, Northern Ethiopia. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *13*(C), 83-98.

Kennedy, K., & Dornan, D. A. (2009). An overview: Tourism non-governmental organizations and poverty reduction in developing countries. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *14*(2), 183-200.

Kline, C. S., & Slocum, S. L. (2015). Neoliberalism in ecotourism? The new development paradigm of multinational projects in Africa. *Journal of Ecotourism, 14*(2-3), 99-112.

Lassou, P. J. C., & Hopper, T. (2016). Government accounting reform in an ex-French African colony: the political economy of neocolonialism. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, *36*, 39-57.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). The only generalization is: There is no generalization. *Case Study Method*, 27-44.

Liverman, D. M., & Vilas, S. (2006). Neoliberalism and the environment in Latin America. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, *31*, 327-363.

Livernash, R. (1992). The growing influence of NGOs in the developing world. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, *34*(5), 12-43.

Lonely Planet (2016). Lonely Planet names the top 10 countries to visit in 2017. Retrieved 2017.12.04 from http://www.elledecor.com/life-culture/travel/news/g3344/lonely-planet-names-the-top-10-countries-to-visit-in-2017/.

Loperena, C. A. (2017). Honduras is open for business: extractivist tourism as sustainable development in the wake of disaster?. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 25*(5), 618-633.

Makoba, J. W. (2002). Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and third world development: An alternative approach to development. *Journal of Global South Studies*, *19*(1), 53.

Manji, F., & O'Coill, C. (2002). The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa. *International Affairs*, *78*(3), 567-584.

Mann, S. (2006). *Ethiopia, in Makeda's footsteps: Towards a strategy for pro-poor tourism development*. World Bank report to Ethiopian Government.

Manyara, G. & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based Tourism Enterprises Development in Kenya: An Exploration of Their Potential as Avenues of Poverty Reduction. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 15*(6), 628-644.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in Ph.D. studies using qualitative interviews. In Forum, Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: *Qualitative Social Research, 11* (3).

Matthews, S. (2017). The role of NGOs in Africa: are they a force for good?. Retrieved 26.02.19 from https://theconversation.com/the-role-of-ngos-in-africa-are-they-a-force-for-good-76227.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication, Inc.

Mbaiwa, J. E. (2015b). Ecotourism in Botswana: 30 years later. *Journal of Ecotourism, 14*(2-3), 204-222.

McKercher, B. (2010). Academia and the evolution of ecotourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *35*(1), 15-26.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2009). *Tourism Development Policy*, Addis Ababa. Retrieved 2019.03.19 from https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/tourism-development-policy-english.pdf.

Mitchell, J., & Ashley, C. (2010). *Value chain analysis and poverty reduction at scale: Evidence from tourism is shifting mind-sets*. Overseas development institute.

Mitchell, J., & Coles, C. (2009). *Enhancing private sector and community engagement in tourism services in Ethiopia*. Overseas development institute. London, UK.

Mitlin, D., Hickey, S., & Bebbington, A. (2007). Reclaiming development? NGOs and the challenge of alternatives. *World Development*, *35*(10), 1699-1720.

Mkono, M. (2019). Neo-colonialism and greed: Africans' views on trophy hunting in social media. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1–16.

Mondino, E., & Beery, T. (2018). Ecotourism as a learning tool for sustainable development. The case of Monviso Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, Italy. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 1-15.

Mukherji, R. (2018). Tourism and Development: the role of NGOs and the private sector. Retrieved 02.26.19 from http://csr-asia.com/newsletter-tourism-and-development-the-role-of-ngos-and-the-private-sector.

Nega, B., & Milofsky, C. (2011). Ethiopia's anti-NGO law and its consequences for economic development. *Community Development Journal, 46*(suppl_2), ii33-ii48.

Nega, B., & Schneider, G. (2014). NGOs, the State, and Development in Africa. *Review of Social Economy, 72*(4), 485–503.

Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-Colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. New York: International.

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 18*(2), 34-35.

Novelli, M. (2015). *Tourism and development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Current issues and local realities*. London: Routledge.

Novelli, M., Barnes, J. I., & Humavindu, M. (2006). The other side of the ecotourism coin: Consumptive tourism in Southern Africa. *Journal of Ecotourism, 5*(1-2), 62-79.

Ojeda, D. (2012). Green pretexts: Ecotourism, neoliberal conservation and land grabbing in Tayrona National Natural Park, Colombia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *39*(2), 357-375.

Parks Canada (PC) (1978). *Ecotour of the Rideau Canal.* Smiths Falls. Parks Canada: 16.

Roy, I., Raquib, T., & Sarker, A. (2017). Contribution of NGOs for socio-economic development in Bangladesh. *Science Journal of Business and Management*, *5*(1), 1-8.

Rudovsky, J. F. (2015). The Ecotourism industry is saving Tanzania's animals and threatening its indigenous people. Retrieved 2018.06.23 from http://www.vice.com/read/casualties-of-conservation-0000649-v22n5.

Ruhanen, L. (2013). Local government: facilitator or inhibitor of sustainable tourism development? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 21*(1), 80-98.

Samatar, A. I. (2007). Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, US warlordism & AU shame. *Review of African Political Economy*, *34*(111), 155-165.

Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management, 20*(2), 245–249.

Scheyvens, R. (2007). Exploring the tourism-poverty nexus. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *10*(2-3), 231-254.

Scheyvens, R., & Russell, M. (2012). Tourism and poverty alleviation in Fiji: Comparing the impacts of small-and large-scale tourism enterprises. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *20*(3), 417-436.

Schwab, K. (2016). *World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report* (2016–2017). Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Shinn, D. (2004). Fighting terrorism in East Africa and the Horn. *Foreign Service Journal*, *81*(9), 40.

Simpson, M. C. (2008a). Community benefit tourism initiatives-A conceptual oxymoron? *Tourism Management*, *29*(1), 1-18.

Simpson, M. C. (2008b). The Impacts of Tourism Initiatives on Rural Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction in South Africa: Mathenjwa and Mqobela. In S. Anna (Eds). *Responsible Tourism Critical Issues for Conservation and Development*, (pp. 239-266). Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, UK.

Singh, S. (1999). On tourism in Goa—NGOs can make a difference. *Tourism Recreation Research, 24*(2), 92–94.doi:10.1080/02508281.1999.11014882.

Smith, D. J. (2010). Corruption, NGOs, and development in Nigeria. *Third World Quarterly*, *31*(2), 243-258.

Snyman, S. (2014). The impact of ecotourism employment on rural household incomes and social welfare in six southern African countries. *Tourism and Hospitality Research, 14*(1-2), 37-52.

Southgate, R. J. (2006). Ecotourism in Kenya: The Vulnerability of Communities, *Journal of Ecotourism, 5*(1-2), 80-96.

Spenceley, A. (2008). Introduction: Responsible Tourism in Southern Africa. In A. Spenceley (Eds). *Responsible Tourism Critical Issues for Conservation and Development* (pp. 1-26), Earthscan, UK.

Stone, M. T. (2015). Community-based ecotourism: a collaborative partnerships perspective. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 1-19.

STRONGBOW (2017). Fact sheet. Retrieved from http://www.cut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Research-Haarhoff.pdf.

Suresh, K. T., Babu, H., & Siva, S. (1999). Reflections on the Role of NGOs in Tourism with Reference to India. *Tourism Recreation Research*, *24*(2), 88-91.

Tamene, K., & Wondira, A. (2019). Economic impacts of tourism on small-scale tourism enterprises in Hawassa City, Southern Ethiopia. *International Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 1-18.

Tegegne, W. A., Moyle, B. D., & Becken, S. (2018). A qualitative system dynamics approach to understanding destination image. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, *8*, 14-22.

The International Ecotourism Society (2018). What is ecotourism? Retrieved 2019.02.11 from http://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism.

Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2015). Strengthening community-based tourism in a new resource-based island nation: Why and how? *Tourism Management*, *48*, 386-398.

Trejos, B., Huang, W. & Chiang, L. N. (2008). The role of NGOs in the development of community-based rural tourism in Costa Rica. *Rural Tourism Research, 2*(1), 63-76.

UNWTO (2017). Konso community tourism project. Retrieved 2018.01.23 from http://step.unwto.org/ar/node/33474.

Waayers, D., Lee, D., & Newsome, D. (2012). Exploring the nature of stakeholder collaboration: a case study of marine turtle tourism in the Ningaloo region, Western Australia. *Current Issues in Tourism, 15*(7), 673-692.

Waktola, A. (1999). Exploratory study of two regions in Ethiopia to identify target areas and partners for intervention, Report No. 6*,* Addis Ababa.

Wall, G. (1997). "Is Ecotourism Sustainable?" *Environmental Management, 21*(4), 483-491.

Weaver, D. (2006). *Sustainable tourism*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Wheeller, B. (2005). Ecotourism/Egotourism and development. In M. Hall & S. Boyd (Eds.), *Nature-Based Tourism in Peripheral Areas: Development or Disaster?* (pp. 263-272). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

Wijesinghe, S. N. R., Mura, P., & Bouchon, F. (2017). Tourism knowledge and neocolonialism – a systematic critical review of the literature. *Current Issues in Tourism,* 1–17.

Wondirad, A. (2017). Who benefits from the ecotourism sector in Southern Ethiopia? *International Journal of Tourism Sciences*, *17*(4), 276-297.

Wondirad, A. N. (2018). *Stakeholder collaboration for sustainable ecotourism development in Southern Ethiopia* (Doctoral dissertation, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University).

Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & Kind, B. (forthcoming). Stakeholder collaboration as a major factor for sustainable ecotourism development in developing countries. *Tourism Management*.

Xu, H., Cui, Q., Sofield, T., & Li, F. M. S. (2014). Attaining harmony: understanding the relationship between ecotourism and protected areas in China. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 22*(8), 1131-1150.

Yitbarek, T. W., Tadie, D., Timer, G., & Fischer, A. (2013). Evaluating governance processes in the sharing of revenues from wildlife tourism and hunting in Ethiopia. *Environmental Conservation, 40*(03), 253-265.

Young, J. (2012). Ethiopian Protected Areas: A "Snapshot". A reference guide for future strategic planning and project funding, 46. Retrieved 2018.04.12 from https://phe-ethiopia.org/admin/uploads/attachment-1167-Eth%20Protected%20Areas%20Snapshot%201_4_2012.pdf.

Zhuang, H., Lassoie, J. P., & Wolf, S. A. (2011). Ecotourism development in China: prospects for expanded roles for non-governmental organisations. *Journal of Ecotourism*, *10*(1), 46-63.