Representation and Materiality in Social Construction of Natural Landscape

: An Alternative Tourism Case, the Jeju Olle Trail

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Abstract

The ‘social construction of nature’ has been increasingly discussed among scholars in Korea, however, processes of the social production of the tourist capital of natural landscapes have yet to be determined. This study aims to identify the processes and outcomes in which a particular form of natural landscapes is discursively established, and materialized. In doing so, it focuses on the political economy of tourist benefit distribution. To achieve the goal, the paper discusses the theoretical background on the discursive and material production of nature. It then examines the Jeju Olle Trail project. The project is emblematic of successful nature-based tourism, relying on landscapes, emphasizing social processes in which progressive discourses on natural landscapes are formed, and materialized based on the political economy embedded in the discourse. The study asks the question of “whose resources are they, and who benefits?,” a fundamental question of political ecology. Research findings contribute to trail-based tourism projects in ways to be just for involved actors.

Keywords: social production of nature, discourses, materiality, natural landscapes, ecotourism, political ecology

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I. Introduction

Trail tourism has recently gained rapid popularity in the country. One of the notable attributes of trails that attract tourists most is natural scenery viewed from trails. By walking along trails, tourists experience mental “healing” among tourists (Suh 2010, Lee and Park 2014). With its popularity, trail tourism has been increasingly implemented by state agencies. The government sector spent 2.3 billion USD establishing about 500 trails across the country from 2010 to 20121). State agencies employ trail tourism projects as leading strategies for regional development. In other words, by providing tourists with opportunities to enjoy natural landscapes, state agencies’ goal is to make tourist revenues, ultimately contributing to local residents’ income. Despite the wide prevalence of trail tourism in number of projects and the scope of budget spending, we have limited understanding about what trail tourism projects have brought to local residents on the ground.

Political ecology frameworks provide a useful perspective in that regard. The scholarship has provided critical perspectives on class struggles over access to and control of natural resources, including landscapes. Landscape political ecology (Neumann 2011, for example), relies on the idea that nature (including landscape) is socially constructed, through interactions of discourse and materiality (Demeritt 2002, Watts and Peet 2004). Nature is viewed as being established in a particular form through discursive and material struggles, which determine the political economy of landscape. The social construction of natural landscape is particularly contested among actors in ecotourism projects when tourists are drawn by natural landscapes, which are at stake among actors. Thus, social production of landscape from the perspective of political ecology is both representational and material.

Although social construction of nature scholarship is recently emerging in Korea (Sung 2015, Jang 2016), examinations are focused on discursive struggles, ignoring materiality embedded in the process. By materiality, I mean first, material production of landscapes, and second, material (political economic) outcomes. In both meanings of materiality, representation is inextricably intertwined. The paper aims to demonstrate that social construction of nature needs to be examined both in representation and in materiality, and their interactions, in order to provide better policy

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1) 2012, October 11, Yonhap News
implications. For that, it examines one of the most popular trail tourism in the country, the Jeju Olle Trail.

The Jeju Olle Trail project became a benchmark of regional development programs among policy makers for its contribution to local economic development and to environmental conservation. One of the main factors that enabled the Jeju Olle Trail to draw many tourists to Jeju Island has been beautiful landscape along the Jeju Olle Trail. The natural landscape is composed of hills, beaches, village lanes, and agricultural fields. Although these components exist in other places in South Korea, those along the Jeju Olle Trail have particularities, which have been discursively and materially established through power struggles among state agencies, a non-governmental organization (NGO), tourists, and local residents. This paper examines the processes and outcomes of establishing landscapes along the Jeju Olle Trail in South Korea. Data was collected through the author’s ethnographic fieldwork in June and July in 2011, when the Jeju Olle Trail’s popularity swept the country. Thus, the data captures the time when discourses and materiality of the Jeju Olle Trail were actively established, providing a meaningful beginning point for the discussion on the evolution of social construction of natural landscapes within the context of Korea.

The paper first discusses the concept of social construction of nature, and literature, both from and beyond the country. Then it moves to the case study to examine how nature is socially constructed representationally and materially along the Jeju Olle Trail, on Jeju Island in South Korea. The conclusion calls for paying attention to material side of social construction of nature. Policy implications and limitations are discussed in conclusion.

II. Social construction of nature

1. Representations

It was the epistemology, i.e. whether the object in our sight is actually the object of its own nature or not. Hacking (1999) lists 24 Xs of the social construction at the beginning of his book
“Social Construction of What?” The first thing that needs to be done in discussing the representation of nature is to define epistemological stance of viewing the things including the nature. Hacking defines social construction of X as:

Hence by constructivism (or social constructivism if we need, on occasion, to emphasize the social), I shall mean various sociological, historical, and philosophical projects that aim at displaying or analyzing actual, historically situated, social interactions or causal routes that led to, or were involved in, the coming into being or establishing of some present entity or fact (Hacking 1999).

The “various social, historical, and philosophical projects” that determine “some present entity or fact” are by no means neutral and apolitical. Our experiences of the reality are totally different depending on who builds up the materiality under which circumstances with what kinds of intentions. The specificities of the social, historical, and philosophical projects determine not only the perception on truths (facts) but also the materiality surrounding us. Once you change perceptions on things, you would actively re-arrange or re-assemble the ‘material’ things in a way to fit your changed perceptions. The established materiality then reinforces the way you perceive and experience the reality. Thus if your perception is changed to serve interests of certain groups of the society, material aspects of the society (environment) would also be established to serve the interests.

Then, how things are socially constructed? In other words, what is the process that ideas are formed, circulated, and transferred into reality? Who generates the ideas? Foucault suggests a framework that is applied to the processes: discourses. The discourse is the site of the contestation of power in an abstract level Foucault 1980. Domination of power occurs when some power can effectively mobilize and deploy tactics including knowledge, necessarily accompanying “the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibrium” (Ibid: 94). Foucault argues that even though power never exercises without aims, it is very hard to pick the ones who “invented” the discourse (Ibid: 95). It is probably because of the omnipresence and continuous struggles of power. Although we accept the assertion of Foucault on the anonymity of power, and on the difficulty to identify the origins of discourse, we are still able to identify who benefits or loses as an effect of power exercising, by analyzing the process that forms and circulates discourses. This analysis about discourse and the effect of power “on nature” is what discursive constructivism seeks to achieve.
Nature refers to, “(1) the essence or defining property of something; (2) a material realm untouched by human activity; and (3) the entire living world, of which the human species is a part” (Gregory et al. 2009). In this study, nature denotes the second meaning. This nature is not just ‘out there’ from human history and politics, nor fixed in a certain situation. It is “far more dynamic, far more changeable, and far more entangled with human history than popular beliefs about ‘the balance of nature’” (Cronon 1996). Braun noted this dynamics of nature from the perspective of postcolonialism, focusing on representation. He explores economic and political calculation in the representations of nature. Specifically, Braun examines “the emergence of ‘nature’ as a discrete and separate object of aesthetic reflection, scientific inquiry, and economic and political calculation at particular sites and scientific historical moments” (Willems-Braun 1997). This ‘emergence of nature’ reads the social construction of nature. Demeritt (2002) approaches social construction of nature from the perspective of social science while Hacking (1999) views the social construction of more general Xs from a philosophy-oriented perspective. Among Demeritt 2002’s typology of social construction of nature by, the “discursive constructivisms” (Ibid: 770; 773-775) leans significantly on the discourse theory of Foucault. They emphasize the role of discursive construction of nature, “indebted to Foucaultian ideas of the power / knowledge relations” (Ibid: 773). The advocates of the discursive constructivism find the current social construction of nature through discourse is problematic. Further, they seek to identify the effects of the construction and to fix bad ones. To discursive constructivists, nature is not what it appears and discussed if we trace back to the history (ironic), and we are to unmask the false appearance (reformist), and finally, we might need to be rebellious (revolutionary) to fix the problems (Hacking, 1999: 19).

The paper juxtaposed the discussion on discourse and power of Foucault and the one on the discursive constructivism of nature to emphasize the linkage between the two. Now, the paper extends the discussion on Foucault in a way to complete the process that a discourse (on nature) is formed (a), circulated (b), practiced (c), and materialized (d). From the above discussion, the process of (a) and (b) is identified. Foucault brings up the ‘discipline’ to explain the process that a discourse becomes ‘a’ truth. Using gaze in various institutions of society such as medical clinics, prisons, and schools, people are trained and tamed to accept and conform to the norms formed from the discourse. While the discipline tailors people in the society, various tactics of state including statistics (: the study, -istics, of the state) and governmentality (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991)
form an invisible apparatus that governs the disciplined peoples. Now, the discourse in (a) and (b) becomes ‘the’ truth, and practiced (c). In the Korean geography literature, how the process from (a) to (b) is materialized in the built environment is still underexplored.

2. Materiality and its Nexus with Representation

Nature is ‘socially’ produced not only in terms of concepts, but also as materiality (Demeritt, 2002: 779). In this regard, the emphasis on the materiality of Marxism has some implication in the social construction of nature. Marx condenses the materialization of ideology in a sentence, “people make landscapes, but not always those of their own choosing” Robbins 2004. Hence, the social construction of nature to Marxists is “usually this sense of a socially constructed material phenomenon they have in mind (Demeritt, 2002: 779). Locating this materiality of ideology in the puzzle of the discursive social construction of nature discussed so far: many things are socially constructed (Hacking). In the social construction, power struggles in discourses, and domination of power in discourses occurs. The domination of power becomes truth and it is practiced through various tactics of states including disciplines (Foucault). Through this process, people’s concepts of the things are manipulated through power. The effects of exercising power are carved in the physical environment (Marxism), which changes a material phenomenon. This process applies to the social construction of nature. The idea about nature is formed and circulated, resulting in the shifts of the concepts of people on nature. As the concepts on nature are accepted as truth, and are practiced through various institutions such as policies or education, people modify surrounding physical nature. The representation or our experience on nature is socially constructed through this process. Thus, we need to question the truth of the nature’s representation rather than accepting it uncritically.

Marxist thoughts also provide implications for capitalist economy and power. Marxists understand power struggles through economic system of a society. Foucault also noted the inextricable character of the linkage between power and economy, and asks, “What means are available to us today if we seek to conduct a non-economic analysis of power? Very few, I believe.” Foucault and Gordon 1980. Nonetheless, while Foucault locates economy under power, Marxists view power as subordinated to economy (Ibid.). The purpose of power struggles is to
acquire more economic values. Exploited labor and nature are accumulated in the form of the capital in the class that owns the means of production. This process under capitalism is realized as materiality in nature, through social relations. As Castree (1995: 19-20, from Demeritt, 2002: 779) argues:

Capitalism commodifies whole landscapes, constructs and reconstructs them in particular (profit motivated) ways· · · ‘First nature’ is replaced by an entirely different historical-geography of natural products. The imperatives of capitalism bring all manner of natural environments and concrete labor processes upon them together in an abstract framework of market exchange. Under capitalism humans relate to nature in a specific way, through commodification of natural products, and in so doing actively appropriate, transform, and creatively destroy it. The ‘natural’ regions of say, the mid-western United States, cannot be understood simply as pre-existent natural grasslands, as the traditional notion of ‘first nature’ would imply. Instead - and this is the point [of Marxist ideas of social nature] - they must be seen as constructed natural environments evolving out of decades of intensive, product-driven conversion into what they presently are.

Thus, natural landscapes that are socially produced are materially experienced among involved actors, through the relations of political economy (Han 2013:144-145).

3. Literature

Relying on the idea on the linkage between representation and materiality, political ecologists have explored how particular framing of nature determines political and economic outcomes among actors who are involved in access and control of nature. For example, Robbins et al. (2012) approach Montana’s landscape as the commons from which social actors struggle to take benefits. Walker and Fortmann (2003) also argue that undefined landscape ownership renders the ideas of landscapes and the subsequent material outcomes particularly contentious because it is hard to define the legitimacy of claimants. Using an African case, Neumann (1998) examines the colonial history of Arusha National Park in Tanzania and its relation to the current state power exercised over the Maru people by denying their customary rights to access livelihood sources located in the park. He reveals that the state power, in conjunction with international agencies, maintains the western construction of Africa established by colonial perspectives. It views African nature as
Table 1: Selected Korean cases on social construction of nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Details of social construction</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cho (2009)</td>
<td>Otaru in Japan</td>
<td>Processes in which the regional identity is socially and politically produced</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwon (2004)</td>
<td>Songchon in Deajeon</td>
<td>Social relations are embedded in place names</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee and Chung (2014)</td>
<td>Seochon in Seoul</td>
<td>The ways in which Seochon is shared through representations as a tourist destination among tourists</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sung (2015)</td>
<td>Soonchoneman National Garden</td>
<td>How the national garden influences in shaping regional identity</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong (2011)</td>
<td>Mt. Dutta, Gangwon</td>
<td>Representation of Mt. Dutta has been produced through local political struggles, presented on local media outlet</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sung (2013)</td>
<td>Seoboo district, Hakodate</td>
<td>Place identity has been made through social contents in order for regional economy revitalization</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jang (2016)</td>
<td>Nature of Jeju Island &amp; Wildlife deer</td>
<td>The ways in which Jeju nature and wildlife deer have been represented have changed through time, in which epistemic community has led framing discourses related to nature</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park (2011)</td>
<td>Zhangjiajie, China</td>
<td>Korean tourists’ consume a Chinese tourist destination with three themes of “naturalness,” “out of this world,” “China”</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* R-Representation; M-Materiality

distinct from culture. Thus, remnants of local culture such as religion, livelihoods, and labor were all erased from the park to conform to western imageries about African nature. Even though the park was established as a park to enable the public to enjoy natural landscape and to attract foreign tourists, local residents have been disenfranchised in the process. As such, political ecologists demonstrate that constructing particular representations and materiality of landscapes is contested and is contingent to multi-scalar political economy and histories.

In Korean literature, discussion on social construction itself is limited in number. Research pertained to social construction of “nature” or “natural landscapes” is even fewer. Thus, the paper selected related research rather broadly, focusing on the concept of the social construction (Table 1). The selected studies provide several insights. First, a great proportion of them discuss the social construction in place making pertained to tourism, as shown from the cases of Lee and Chung.
(2014) and Sung (2015). Second, social construction of nature is recently emerging in the literature. Although there has been research on place making of tourists destinations, particular focus on “nature” has not been given until recently (Sung 2013, for example). Third, and most importantly for the purpose of this paper, the studies analyze representations of tourist destinations rather ignoring material outcomes of particular discourses as shown from Table 1 (with an exception). Although there exists research on how residents’ place identity and perception on tourism projects impacts their behavior in hosting projects (Kim et al. 2017, for example), how local residents are politically and economically situated as a result of being involved in tourism projects is poorly understood. This is an important lacuna if we look for policy implications from studies of social construction of nature. This paper examines discursive and material processes of the place making of the Jeju Olle Trail. It contributes to the social construction of nature literature by illustrating the processes in which nature is constructed not only discursively but also materially.

### III. An Alternative Tourism, the Jeju Olle Trail

#### 1. Study Site

Jeju Island is the largest island in South Korea, located 285 km south from the main land. It is easily accessible from the main land by plane and ferries. Due to isolation from the mainland and the distinctive natural environment, the Island has different culture and natural resources from the main land. The uniqueness has attracted national tourists, and tourism became one of the major industries in Jeju Island. Since the 1960s, the central government has taken strong leadership in export-driven national economic development. The strategic economic development was successful, leading South Korea to be included in one of the Newly Industrialized Countries. Because of its isolated location, it has disadvantage to develop in manufacturing. Thus, the Korean government focused on developing tourism industry in Jeju Island, building infrastructure for tourism development such as constructing roads and opening sea routes for the ferries. As such, tourism became one of the critical industries in Jeju Island. Total product generated from the
toursism industry accounted for 32% of the Gross Regional Domestic Product in 2009, and 85% of the employed population is working in the Service industry (Jeju Special Self Governing Province). Tourism in Jeju Island heavily relies on natural resources such as falls, caves and natural landscapes. Among 454 tourist destinations that the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province has designated, only 3 destinations are historical sites, and the rest of 451 sites are based on natural resources (Jeju Special Self Governing Province).

Nonetheless, it has experienced shrinking tourism industry influenced by exploding demand for overseas tourism since the early 1990s. However, a former woman journalist initiated an ecotourism named the Jeju Olle Trail in 2007. ‘Olle’ in Jeju Island dialectic, refers to small lanes inside a village. It also means ‘will you come?’ in Korean. She established an NGO, the Jeju Olle Foundation, to extend the paths, maintain, and further promote the paths. The leader of the NGO gathered information about existing walking paths from local residents, linked and designated them as the paths of the Jeju Olle Trail. The paths also pass through coastal villages. The purpose of the designation is to provide opportunities to tourists to enjoy the natural landscape of Jeju Island as it is, and to interact with Jeju residents living everyday lives there. Unlike conventional tourism development that accompanied large construction, the Jeju Olle Trail is designed to minimize modification of the natural landscape. It also differs in its initiatives of the tourism developments. Jeju Olle has been initiated by the NGO and Jeju residents have initiated the Jeju Olle Trail while conventional tourism projects are usually initiated by the central government and external capital. The Jeju Olle Trail contributed to increasing tourists, revitalizing tourism industry of Jeju Island. With the national popularity of alternative tourism such as responsible, ethical, and meditative tourism, the Jeju Olle Trail began an alternative tourism boom in South Korea, leading other provinces to competitively develop their own ‘Olle’.

2. Discourse Building

The Foundation leader’s two books illustrate in detail how the Jeju Olle Trail became an icon of alternative tourism in South Korea through discourse, and how it changed the perception of tourists on Jeju Island’s nature (Suh 2008, 2010). In her personal trip to Santiaio de Compostela, the leader decided to open a walking trail in her hometown, one that comparable to the course of Santiago de
Compostela. She worked as a journalist and an editor in the progressive media of South Korea. Her career enabled her to have social networks of progressive figures in South Korea. On coming back from Santiago de Compostela, she gathered with the “ten sisters” that include an international traveler, Korean traditional medication doctor, a renowned feminist scholar and journalist, an editor of the most-well known progressive media in South Korea, and a singer who is known for her protest against the oppressive regime in the 1970s. These figures are celebrities in South Korea to the degree that some are designated as one of the ‘wish to be’ among college students (Yonhap News TV 2013). These ten sisters visited Jeju Island to walk the path that Ms. Suh suggested as pilot tourists, and became supporters of this project (Suh 2008: 20-35).

What the ‘pilot tourists’ were fascinated about in the project was not only the beautiful natural landscape of Jeju Island but also the way that the natural landscape would be developed and utilized. The modification of the nature would be limited as long as the principle of the tourism development is abided by: minimize any change in the original nature of Jeju Island. The paper will get back to this process in the next section on the practice. As the tourism project succeeds, the environmental conservation idea dominated the tourism development of Jeju Island. Although the network did not directly support in developing the project, their indirect support and involvement in the Jeju Olle Trail has a symbolic meanings. The paper contends that the social network of the NGO leader functioned as a ‘cultural elites.’ By deploying the network at the beginning process of the project, the foundation leader could form the environmental discourse about nature and tourism in the project development. Tourists began to view the nature of Jeju Island differently: many of them traveled the island before, but they now seek to interact with nature, rather than just to consume them as they did in the conventional tourism of Jeju Island. The tourists are indeed experiencing the healing and reconciling effect as introduced in the second book of the foundation leader (Suh 2010). The paper argues that the social network contributed to creating people’s beliefs on the effect of the Jeju Olle Trail and the shift of the relation with nature.

Since the opening of the Jeju Olle Trail in 2007, tourists who visited Jeju Island have significantly increased. It took 9 years to increase 25% of tourists from 1996 to 2005, while it took only 4 years to achieve the same amount of increase (26%) from 2006 to 2010 (The Jeju Special Self-Governing Provincial Tourism Association). The increase of tourists created another type of discourse on the Jeju Olle Trail: the project is beneficial to the regional economy. While the
environmental discourse was largely circulated among external tourists who were culturally influenced from the concept of the alternative tourism, the economic discourse appealed mostly to the locals including the local government. Combining the two purposes, the Jeju Olle Trail became an icon of the alternative tourism that has minimal impact to the environment and is beneficial to the local economy. The discourses are further circulated through the various activities of the leader of the NGO including publications, exposure to local and national media, and numerous speeches in various institutions such as universities, local governments and private sectors. In addition, the Jeju Olle Trail became even more popular after being broadcasted in the most popular TV program by early 2010 in South Korea “1 night and 2 days”.

3. Materialization: Practicing the Ideas

1) Decision-Making and Resources

The ideas in the discourses are being materialized through a comprehensive mobilization of the resources of Jeju Island and numerous decision-making processes. Here, the development refers to the process to discover the existing paths and link them, extending the overall course of the Jeju Olle Trail. The management refers to the process to maintain the developed paths, and promote the tourism nationally and internationally. The NGO, Jeju Olle has been in charge of the development and the management of the tourism.

The decision-making on which paths to include in the Jeju Olle Trail is based on the three considerations: 1) aesthetic considerations of the landscape for tourists; 2) environmental conservations, as shown from the paths # 14’s Gotjawal forest. Gotjawal forest has a unique ecology, and several plant and animal species are discovered in the forest. Local environmentalists attempt to preserve the forest against the constructions of tourist facilities such as resorts and hotels in the forest destroying the ecology; 3) contribution to fostering local economies, as shown from the paths # 6-B that passes through a local market ‘Seoguipo Market’ which later changed its name to ‘Everyday Olle Market’ (The sales of 2009 increased by 40% after the market was included in the course, from Suh 2010: 242). The market was designated as one of the paths by accepting the request of the mayor of Seoguipo city, who wanted to revitalize the market. The foundation leader writes that this was an unusual decision for the NGO, because it never accepts suggestions from
both public and private sectors (Ibid). Maintenance of the course such as cleaning the paths, and painting arrows that show directions of the paths are done by the Jeju Olle Foundation when necessary. State agencies of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province support the NGO by building facilities to provide convenience for tourists. However, there is little established process in which local residents are included in decision-making processes regarding the Jeju Olle Trail. Thus, decisions regarding maintaining the Jeju Olle Trail courses and planning to promote Jeju Olle are made through the collaboration between the Jeju Olle Foundation and state agencies of the JSSGP, instead of local residents, as proclaimed by the Jeju Olle Foundation and JSSGP state agencies. Nonetheless, the substantial resources that are required in developing and managing the project tourism derive from the local residents and the local government as shown in the followings:

① Environmental Knowledge
When the foundation leader initiated the project, what she basically did was to discover paths in coastlines that are used only among residents. As an indigenous, she knew that there are those unknown paths, but she remembered just a couple of the paths that she used to use. The leader recruited local residents for this knowledge at first. However, as the tourism project succeeds, i.e., economic benefits are visible by the increase of tourists, she didn’t have to recruit for the knowledge. Because many local residents voluntarily, and actively wanted to let her know their own paths in order to be included in the Jeju Olle Trail.

② Culture and History
One of the prominent differences of this alternative tourism and the conventional tourism is that the former includes everyday lives of the residents of Jeju Island. Tourists experience the local lives that have distinctive characteristics compared to those of the mainland. They often encounter local residents strolling or working in the field on their way of walking the paths. The paths also pass through historical sites of Jeju Island such as a cemetery of a famous scholar in the later Chosun Dynasty Junghee Kim, who were sent to the Island as a punishment, and died there. The cultural and historical aspects in the course are one of the reasons that the Jeju Olle Trail attracts more tourists.
Lands

Although the natural landscape is a communal resource, the paths that tourists actually have to walk through are lands that belong to local residents. The lands are either privately or communally (village) owned. When the NGO decide to include the path to the Jeju Olle Trail, they ask owners of the land if they could endow usufacts of the land. In most of the cases, residents agree to endow them. However, some have changed their mind, and want to bring back the rights. Sometimes the owners sue the NGO to bring the rights back. For example, because of the legal dispute over the property rights between Hyosung Inc. and the Jeju Olle Foundation, part of the path # 7 has been blocked, and tourists had to detour on that point.

Labor

Even the least amount of modification in the natural landscape still requires certain labor inputs. In linking existing paths, the NGO often encountered difficulties when the linking parts are not conducive to walking. Volunteers among the locals helped in physically modifying the paths. A part in one of the paths is named after the most active volunteer in the development process (Soobongro, Suh 2008: 82). Numerous other volunteers including a troupe of the Navy contribute to building the paths and painting the arrows for the direction of paths. In the management process, some local residents work as guides of Jeju Olle, paid by the local government. There are numerous voluntary cleaning activities of the paths from various sources such as the local government, local residents, tourists, and corporations.

Finance

Basically, the finance for the development and management comes from the NGO supporters’ donation. Margins from selling accessories such as handkerchief and the Olle passports with the logo of the Jeju Olle Trail on them are also one of the sources of the NGO’s finance. The NGO uploads the quarterly budget on the webpage (http://www.jejuolle.org). In 2010, it had $ 622,000’s income and $ 609,904’s expenses. Let alone the NGO’s budget, the local government is also allocating budget for the development and management of Jeju Olle. The local government of Seoguipo city is criticized to be too generous in the budget allocation on Jeju Olle, compared to other tourism projects of the city (Halla Ilbo 11/30/2010; Seoguipo Newspaper 12/3/2010).
The NGO depends on external resources for the development and management of the Jeju Olle Trail. Yet, there is little evidence for resistance against the strong leadership of the NGO in developing and managing the Jeju Olle Trail except the issues of property rights and the budgets, which demonstrate that the trial is a project determined by a particular political economy. Most actors (the local government, local residents, tourists and private sector) appear to conform to the rules set by the Jeju Olle Foundation, trying to achieve their own purposes.

2) Outcomes

(1) Political inequality caused by competitions

Although the contribution to the regional economy has been one of the widely accepted beliefs about the Jeju Olle Trail, this paper argues that this economic emphasis in fact reinforces the power of the NGO. The economic rationale fosters economic competitions in different scales. Jeju Olle renders everyday lives of residents to be commodified, just like the natural landscape. They are indirectly sold through the tourists’ consumption of other commodities such as foods and accommodations. The locals run small scale of restaurants and lodging-houses for tourists. Some of them are affiliated with the NGO. Once a business is accepted as an affiliated by the NGO, its business title is printed on the Olle passport. The affiliated businesses might have more tourist customers with their titles in the passport, but they have to provide certain amount of discount for the customers that bring the passport. At first, this system seems to be mutually beneficial to tourists and local businesses. Nonetheless, it could be even more beneficial to the NGO in terms of political power, because the local businesses have to compete among them to be accepted as an affiliated by the NGO.

The economic competitions in another scale also contribute to reinforcing the power of the Jeju Olle Foundation. Villagers, who believe that their village has sellable natural landscape, and want to increase economic income using it, ask the NGO to include their village in the Jeju Olle Trail as a prospective participant. As mentioned above, the final decision is made by the NGO. Thus, the residents are subject to the instructions or directions of the NGO. For example, the leader of the most recent participant, Chuja Island in the path # 18-1, persuaded the leader of the NGO to include the village in the Jeju Olle Trail in an effort to vitalize the economy of the Island. In this process,
power inequality is involved between two subjects when a person tries to persuade another who will make a decision that determines economic condition of the persuading one. The equality increased because many villages want to participate in the Jeju Olle Trail. The economic competitions among villages render the villages more vulnerable to the power of the NGO. As such, the residents are politically marginalized through the exclusion from decision-making processes and economic competitions.

(2) Economic inequality

Then, the question becomes whether or not the residents are actually better off from the shifts of the natural landscape and everyday lives at least in terms of economy. Who economically benefits from the Jeju Olle Trail?

The local businesses for tourists in the Jeju Olle Trail are hardly in large scale. The types of business include restaurants, lodging houses, and street-selling. The rates are not very high, ranging from $10 to $1-200 a day (mostly around $30) in case of lodging-houses, and $4-$10 for restaurants. Considering the concept of this alternative tourism, tourists would not spend that much. Tourist activities are mostly walking, which do not accompany consumption. Again, considering environmental conservation concept of the tourism, tourists tend to use public transportation (information of public transportation for the Jeju Olle Trail is easily found on the web, $1-10) instead of renting cars ($70-$100) (in 2011) as they did in the conventional tourism of Jeju Island. In addition, the Jeju Olle Trail does not have entrance fees that other tourist destinations in Jeju Island have. If a tourist wants to enjoy only the natural landscape along the trail trying not to spend much money, the tourist can achieve the goal with less than $30. Thus, economic gain of local residents does not count much.

On the other hand, the increase of tourists does benefit low cost airline companies because tourists mostly use airlines to get to Jeju Island. Similar case is found in the most recently opened Jeju Olle # 18-1 path. Chuja Island could participate in Jeju Olle after the leader of the Island actively persuaded the foundation leader as mentioned above. Nonetheless, there are complaints from the residents that the participation only benefits the ferry company that runs from Jeju Island to Chuja Island, suggesting limited economic benefits for local residents.
(3) Uneven spatial development

The Jeju Olle Trail is a spatial project: locations and geographic resources determine participations in the project. Once a village is included in the Jeju Olle Trail, village residents expect visible vitalization of the village economy because of incoming tourists. Infrastructure would be developed in the village (the local government had plans to develop infrastructure) to (1) make the villages that participate in the Jeju Olle Trail more accessible; and (2) provide facilities for tourists). Let alone actual economic benefits to the participants of the Jeju Olle Trail, inclusion of some villages, but not other villages will cause uneven spatial development among villages in Jeju Island. The Jeju Olle Trail engenders a new type of inequalities.

The above inequalities of the Jeju Olle Trail illustrate how political and economic inequalities are caused through the process in which natural landscape is discursively and materially constructed for capitalist production. Foucault pointed out political inequality and division as a result of power struggles, and the inextricable linkage between politics and economy (Foucault 1980: 94; Foucault and Gordon 1980). Economic inequality is one of the common outcomes of capitalist production. In line with this, many scholars including Peck and Tickell 2002 and Guthman 2004 argued or examined uneven spatial development caused by intensive capitalization.

IV. Conclusion

This paper explores the nexus of representation and materiality in social construction of nature. It investigates how nature is socially (actually politically) constructed through the process from discourses to practices, and how this process results in certain groups’ political and economic interests through a case study of the Jeju Olle Trail on Jeju Island in South Korea. The process of forming and circulating discourses create and reinforce the power of particular actors. Practicing the ideas in the discourses further reinforces the power although the resources required in building up the natural landscape are mobilized from the local residents and the local government. In the practicing process, not only the natural landscape of Jeju Island but also cultural, historical resources are comprehensively modified in a political and economic ways. Through the Jeju Olle Trail, the everyday lives of the residents are exposed to tourism, and tourist capitalism deeply
penetrates into the lives of residents. The power-laden struggles pertain to the Jeju Olle Trail result in the political, economic and spatial inequalities.

The findings of the paper provide policy implications. First, the case indicates that new project implementation to facilitate regional development of underdeveloped regions may create new sorts of inequalities in unexpected ways. In the Jeju Olle Trail case, providing additional income sources to rural villagers were proclaimed, considering that they stayed out of tourist capitalism on Jeju Island. Yet, the project resulted in economic and spatial inequalities among rural villagers. Second, the case suggests that there needs careful evaluation after implementing regional development programs. The Jeju Olle Trail case is still known as one of the most successful tourist projects in the country, benefitting local people. However, the success stories conceal a lot more detailed stories untold to the public. This study shows the detailed process of project implementation by investigating what is happening on the ground. Third, related to the second, this study calls for an attention to politics in social production of nature. By politics, I particularly mean the politics over discourse production and benefit distribution.

These policy implications could be provided due to the study’s particular focus not only on representation of natural landscapes but also material outcomes of it. Thus, the study calls for more case studies that explore wide range of the nexus between representation and materiality in the social construction of nature. Despite of the study’s contribution to the literature, it has limitation in showing context-specific (historically, geographically, intra-community, and institutionally) processes of the social construction of nature. The task is also left to following studies.
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3인의명 심사 필
상징성과 물질성 결합으로서의 경관 사회적 구성주의
-대안적 관광 프로그램 제주 올레길 사례-

남 수연

요 약

본 연구는 자연의 사회적 생산을 연구함에 있어 추상적인 담론형성에 대한 검증 뿐 아니라 이로 인한 물질적 결과에 대한 분석을 병행할 것을 제안하는 것을 목적으로 한다. "자연에 대한 사회적 생산"은 최근 우리나라 학계에서 논의가 이루어지기 시작하는 분야이다. 그러나 관광자원으로서의 자연경관이 생산되는 과정은 담론형성 과정에 대부분 집중되어 있으며, 이를 통해 지역 주민들에게 나타나는 정치경제적 결과에 대해서는 상대적으로 관심이 적다. 이는 정책적 시사점을 제공하는 데 한계를 가지는 결과로 나타날 수 있다. 이에 따라 본 연구는 관광자원으로서의 자연경관에 관한 주도적인 담론의 형성 뿐 아니라 담론이 물질적인 자연경관으로 형상화되고 이 자원에서 발생하는 이익이 배분되는 과정 및 결과를 규명한다. 특히 담론형성 및 자원배분을 둘러싼 관련 주체들 간 역학관계에 중점을 둔다. 본문은 먼저 자연의 사회적 생산이 초래하는 상징적, 물리적 결과에 대한 이론적 논의를 진행한 후, 국내외 자연의 사회적 생산 문헌을 고찰한다. 그런 다음, 자연경관을 이용한 관광의 대표적인 성공사례인 제주 올레길의 자연경관을 둘러싸는 사회적 담론형성 및 담론에 내재된 정치경제적 기반이 물리적으로 실현되는 과정을 사례연구로 제시하고 있다. 마지막으로 정책적 시사점, 연구개선에 관한 집량 방향 등이 제출을 통해 제시된다. 이를 통해 본 연구는 "누구의 자원이며, 이익은 누구에게 돌아가는가?"라는 정치생태학의 근본적 질문을 자연경관에 대한 분석을 통해 제기하고 있다. 본 연구의 결과는 2010년을 기점으로 지속되고 있는 전국의 자연경관을 기반으로 하는 걸이 자연환경에 대한 영향을 최소화하면서도 주변 지역경제향상의 실효성을 가시적으로 하는 정책수립에 시사점을 제공한다.

주제어: 자연의 사회적 생산, 자연경관, 정치생태학, 정치경제학, 걸는 길

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