4. Community-based Tourism in Asia
Chair: Claudia Dolezal

Community-based tourism (CBT) is an alternative form of tourism that emerged out of bottom-up development efforts and is widely used by governments, NGOs and development agencies to foster community empowerment and development. Particularly in the developing world it is seen as a type of tourism that is aimed at ‘making an impact’ on socio-economic, environmental and political levels. In Asia, CBT is seen as a form of tourism that enables rural and often marginalised communities to diversify their livelihoods and capitalise on their assets and skills, while also contributing to their preservation. At the same time, it is a form of tourism that is welcomed by travellers trying to get off the beaten track and explore destinations from the residents’ perspective.

However, CBT has also seen much criticism. It is often romanticised as a form of tourism that promises community ownership and collaboration, while posing a range of challenges at the same time. The fact that CBT comes with complex power relations between community members but also outside actors, the obstacles to participating meaningfully in CBT and the reliance on assistance from outside constitute some of the major criticisms.

This session invites papers that focus on CBT projects in Asia, which debate not only these challenges and failures to deliver but also the positive impacts of CBT on the ground. It welcomes contributions that focus both at micro (i.e. understanding community power relations, NGO involvement) as well as macro level (i.e. where CBT sits in the overall tourism landscape and the role it plays in tourism policy). Contributions may discuss socio-cultural, environmental and/or economic aspects relating to CBT but also the wider role it has to play for development and in shaping Agenda 2030. Particularly the sharing of best practise examples is encouraged so to create opportunities to maximise CBT’s benefits on the ground.