



TOURISM CASES

October 2020

Exploring the Case Preserving the Ifugao Rice Terraces

Author: **David Ward-Perkins**

Affiliation: **TEAM Tourism Consulting**

© CAB International 2020

in association with **team**^t

10.1079/tourismetc.2020.0017

Introduction

The case of the Ifugao Rice Terraces opens up a specific and important aspect of tourism: its integration into the management of cultural heritage.

Understanding the case

- To complement the case, look up the history of the Ifugao Rice Terraces, including their recognition as a World Heritage Site and development as an important tourism destination.
- The case study describes the increasing neglect of the terraces, also identifying 'unrestrained tourism' as one of the reasons for the gradual disappearance of cultural rituals and festivals. Why would SITMo now want to use tourism as a tool for preserving the local culture?
- SITMo's approach is based on seven interrelated programmes. What actions or initiatives would you expect each programme to cover? Why are all seven programmes necessary; and how do they complement each other?
- The first diagram in the section 'Cooperation and stakeholders' relationships' presents SITMo as central to the inter-stakeholder relations concerning tourism in the short term. Why is that necessary? Why are some stakeholders – in particular tourists and travel agents – discouraged from interacting directly with the host villages?
- A goal of the partners is to revive five 'knowledge systems', which are listed. Quite a lot has been written about the Ifugao Terraces or can be found online. Find examples of actions or initiatives relating to each of these five.

Avenues for study

The case raises a number of issues. Each one can be the basis of major study projects, whether as subjects for dissertation or as debating issues in seminars or the classroom.

1. **Mass tourism** as experienced at major cultural sites. This phenomenon has become an issue of controversy at some UNESCO World Heritage Sites – seeming to contradict the conservation goals of the World Heritage programme. A possible study project: exploring solutions for mitigating these problems, on the basis of examples from around the world.
2. **Stakeholder cooperation.** In the section on 'Weaknesses of stakeholder cooperation', the case identifies cooperation and communication issues; in particular, a tension between SITMo and the Provincial Tourism Office. The testimony of practitioners or consultants that work on tourism development will reveal that such tensions are common when there are multiple stakeholders.
On the basis of interviews with consultants and practitioners and/or on the study of other cases, draft some simple rules or guidelines to facilitate good stakeholder relations.
3. **Fossilizing of culture.** According to the author of the case study, a risk of cultural conservation is the 'fossilizing of culture'. Find other examples of cultural conservation, in other countries. Is this a real risk? Look, for example, at cases of UNESCO-protected intangible heritage. If it is a risk, what can be done about it?
4. **Quality tourists.** In the section on 'Economic outcomes and contributions', the term 'quality tourists' appears: a term that may be used by DMOs seeking to change the profile of their current visitors. Is this a useful term? Is there a general definition of a 'quality tourist' or is it different from case to case?
5. **Perceptions of the local community.** In general, the case is narrated from the point of view of SITMo. How do you think locals perceive this organization? Do you think there is always agreement with SITMo's recommendations?
6. **Future developments.** How do you imagine the initiatives described in this case moving forward? If the efforts of SITMo and their partners is successful, what could these communities look like in 20 years' time? In particular, will the Ifugao Rice Terraces still be offering visitors an original and authentic experience, rooted in tradition?