Title: Tourism and Gendered Silences: Emplacing the Meaning of Gender In/Equality
Author: Claudia Eger[1], Graham Miller[2], & Caroline Scarles[2]
Affiliation: University of Warwick[1]; University of Surrey[2]
Contact: c.eger@warwick.ac.uk
Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

Gendered discourses of community life establish parallel narratives of tourism and development that can provide limited scope for transformational change. This raises questions about the ways in which tourism can be integrated more effectively within the gender agenda of destinations. By emplacing the meaning of gender and dis/empowerment in Berber communities, this study aims to engage with the multiple subjectivities that (re)produce an understanding of gender-based inequality. While tourism does not directly interact with women's empowerment in this context, tour operators' investment in education projects for girls contributes to the creation of alternative dialogues between community and development discourses.

The adoption of an Islamic feminist framework promotes a critical and contextual understanding of how difference is produced through discourse and how this is manifested through wider material and cultural inequalities. To study the complex intersections and interactions between theory, context, and partial perspectives, this research adopts a case study approach positioned within the context of tour operators' involvement in destination communities, identifying the Education for All project in Morocco as an example of a tourism-supported educational project. Data collection draws on participant observation and qualitative interviews, with the research conducted with school-aged children being paired with respondent-led visual methods.

Findings show that the girls' understanding of empowerment is based on a sense of responsibility for the self, which does not forfeit the flourishing of community bonds. However, it questions underpinning gender ideologies that build on an understanding of equality based on respect and shame. Women's increasing education and demand of respect rests on processes of negotiation and mobilisation that, over time, might have the potential to challenge the local gender order and have knock-on effects on wider community development. This process can be in alignment with social norms and general community desire. However, there is significant scope for it to be disruptive, and it is through these disruptions that the current understanding can be challenged and the opportunity to create differences from within is afforded.