

# ANTHROPOLOGY OF TOURISM: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives

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■ **Abstract** Tourism is relevant to many theoretical and real-world issues in anthropology. The major themes anthropologists have covered in the study of tourism may be divided conceptually into two halves: One half seeks to understand the origins of tourism, and the other reveals tourism's impacts. Even when taken together, these two approaches seem to produce only a partial analysis of tourism. The problem is that most studies aimed at understanding the origins of tourism tend to focus on tourists, and most research concerning the impacts of tourism tend to focus on locals. The goal of future research should be to explore incentives and impacts for both tourists and locals throughout all stages of tourism. This more holistic perspective will be important as we explore the ways in which ecotourism and other alternative forms of tourism can generate social, economic, and environmental benefits for local communities while also creating truly transformative experiences for tourists.

Tourism has some aspects of showbiz, some of international trade in commodities; it is part innocent fun, part a devastating modernizing force. Being all these things simultaneously, it tends to induce partial analysis only.

Victor Turner, 1974

## INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists and tourists seem to have a lot in common. Both spend time exploring the cultural productions and rituals of society, and both carry the status of outsider as they make forays into the lives of others. Though as anthropologists we may be loath to admit any relationship to the sandal-footed, camera-toting legions in our midst, the truth is that tourism can be an ideal context for studying issues of political economy, social change and development, natural resource management, and cultural identity and expression. Indeed, many of the major questions that concern cultural anthropologists appear in the study of tourism.

Using the lens of tourism, anthropologists have asked many questions. What are the cross-cultural meanings of work and leisure (MacCannell 1976; Nash 1981,

1996)? What are the connections between play, ritual, and pilgrimage (Cohen 1972, Graburn 1983, Turner 1982)? What are the dynamics and impacts of intercultural contact between tourists and locals (Machlis & Burch 1983, Nuñez 1989, Rossel 1988, Silverman 2001)? How is culture represented in tourist settings, and how is it perceived (Adams 1984, 1995; Bruner 1987; Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Urry 1990)? How are cultural traditions changed or reinvented over time to match tourist expectations (Bendix 1989, Gamper 1981, Leong 1989), and what can distinguish the genuine from the spurious (Boorstin 1964)? How and why are ethnic stereotypes constructed and manipulated for tourism (Cohen 1979, Desmond 1999, MacCannell 1984, Van den Berghe 1994)? How do indigenous societies change as they become integrated with the tourism market (Mansperger 1995, Seiler-Baldinger 1988)? How do values about culture change once they are commodified (Cohen 1988, Greenwood 1977), and how do values about nature change (Davis 1997, Groom et al 1991, Orams 1999)? How can conserving natural areas and cultural traditions for tourism lead to benefits for local communities (Eadington & Smith 1992, Honey 1999, Lindberg 1991)? What are the relations of power in the context of tourism that determine who wins and who loses (Stonich 2000, Young 1999), and why is local participation relevant to the success of tourism (Bookbinder et al 1998, Wunder 1999, Epler Wood 1998)? In seeking to answer these and other questions, many anthropologists have made tourism the main focus of their interpretation and analysis.

In this review, I highlight several of the key themes anthropologists have covered in the study of tourism. I suggest that the current literature on tourism may be divided conceptually into two halves, one that focuses on understanding the origins of tourism and one that aims to analyze the impacts of tourism. One of my main points is that both approaches, even when taken together, seem to tell only half the story. The problem is that many studies about the origins of tourism tend to focus on tourists, and much of the research directed at the impacts of tourism tend to analyze just the locals.

Exploring only parts of the two-way encounters between tourists and locals, or between "hosts and guests," has left us with only half-explanations. Although we have theories about the historical origins of tourism (Adler 1989, Towner & Wall 1991), why people travel as tourists in the modern era (MacCannell 1976), or why some tourists seek particular kinds of destinations and experiences over others (Cohen 1988), we lack an understanding of why people and host communities engage in tourism in particular ways. In the absence of analysis, we have been left with assumptions, and typically what we have assumed is that tourism has been imposed on locals, not sought, and not invited.

On the flip side, when we examine the impacts of tourism, our work has tended to focus more on locals than on tourists, and again, we have been left with only a partial analysis. For example, we have learned several things about the ways in which host communities tend to change in the aftermath of tourism. Local economies tend to become either strengthened from employment opportunities (Mansperger 1995) or made more dependent on tourist dollars (Erisman 1983);

local traditions and values can either become meaningless (Greenwood 1977) or more significant (Van den Berghe 1994) once they are commodified in tourism; and local residents can either bear the brunt of resource degradation (Stonich 2000) or become the primary stewards of resource protection (Young 1999) in the context of tourism. We know practically nothing, however, about the impacts of tourism on the tourists themselves. How are they affected by what they see, do, and experience during their travels?

These gaps in our understanding can also be characterized in terms of theory versus data for different kinds of analyses. In their assessments of what motivates tourists (i.e., the psychosocial factors, material conditions, etc.), several scholars have posited generalizable theories (MacCannell 1976, Graburn 1983, Nash 1981). Yet, relatively little empirical data has been analyzed to support or refute such theories. Conversely, in the examination of the impacts of tourism, researchers have relied much more on data than on theory. Though the literature is well stocked with ethnographic case studies of tourism's impacts in host communities, we have yet to develop models or analytical frameworks that could help us predict the conditions under which locals experience tourism in particular ways.

I elaborate on these gaps in the literature with greater detail in the following pages. My main message is that we should be posing new kinds of questions in the anthropology of tourism, especially as we begin to consider the social, economic, and environmental merits of ecotourism and other alternative forms of tourism. In the past decade or so, the tourism industry has taken major shifts toward goals of economic and ecological sustainability, local participation, and environmental education. Just as the industry has changed, so too should our research objectives. I suggest that we devote more attention to two kinds of inquiry. On the host end, what are some of the factors that can explain particular kinds of local involvement in tourism? On the guest end, what are the differential effects of certain kinds of tourism on guests' attitudes and behaviors, both in the midst of their tour and once they have returned home?

Throughout the paper I refer primarily to tourism that involves people from Western developed parts of the world visiting either non-Western or economically underdeveloped parts of the world. Of course, the tourism industry includes many other types of travel and leisure, including family vacations to Disney World, group tours through art museums and battlefields, and honeymoons in Las Vegas. Some of my discussions are relevant to these other types of tourism, but mostly I make special reference to international tourism that brings people together from often highly disparate socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND TOURISM

Until the 1970s, few anthropologists showed much academic interest in tourism. Though tourism was certainly relevant to the peoples and places many anthropologists were studying, few perceived it as a legitimate focus of analysis (Nash 1996).

One exception was Nuñez, who described weekend tourism in a Mexican village in 1963. In the past two decades, a whole field has emerged, complete with refereed journals, most notably *The Annals of Tourism Research*, conferences, university courses, and oft-cited seminal works. One of the best-known pioneering works in the academic study of tourism is by Smith (1989), first published in 1977. Her volume provided both a preliminary theoretical perspective and 12 case studies documenting the impacts of tourism. MacCannell (1976) has also been highly influential, especially for developing a theory of tourism in modern society. Several key scholars have published field-defining articles over the years (Cohen 1972, 1984; Crick 1989; Graburn 1983; Jafari 1977; Nash 1981; Nash & Smith 1991;) More recent introductory compendiums include those by Burns (1999), Chambers (1997, 1999), and Nash (1996).

Several factors make tourism especially relevant to anthropology. For one, tourism occurs in most, if not all, human societies. It is, at least, safe to say that people in nearly every society have been touched in some way by tourism. Many anthropologists have witnessed first-hand the changes wrought by tourism in their field sites. In fact, tourism seems to occupy at least a subsection in many studies that otherwise have little to do with tourism per se. Places off the beaten path—the kinds of places often of most interest to anthropologists—are increasingly opening to tourism as the international economy globalizes, and as transnational networks of transportation and communication are improved (Lanfant et al 1995). Today, tourists are gaining access to even the most remote destinations in the Amazon (Castner 1990, Linden 1991), the Himalayas (Jayal 1986, McEachern 1995), the Antarctic (Hall & Johnston 1995, Vidas 1993), and, yes, outer space (Rogers 1998).

The economic importance of tourism has also merited the attention of anthropologists. As Greenwood (1989) noted, tourism is “the largest scale movement of goods, services, and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen” (p. 171). The World Tourism Organization (2000) estimated that the number of international tourists traveling in the world in 1999 was 664 million. The International Ecotourism Society (1998) calculated that tourism receipts represent one third of the world trade in services. Such figures point to the fact that tourism is a significant catalyst of economic development and sociopolitical change, processes that are central to the interests of many anthropologists. Especially among those concerned about sustainable development and conservation, ecotourism has become a special focus.

Finally, tourism has captured the attention of anthropologists because it often involves face-to-face encounters between people of different cultural backgrounds. Lett (1989) once credited tourism with bringing about “the single largest peaceful movement of people across cultural boundaries in the history of the world” (p. 275). When tourists and locals come together, both have the opportunity not only to glimpse how others live, but also to reflect on their own lives through the eyes of others. As a result, these cross-cultural interactions often cue “live performances” of some of the broadest theoretical issues in anthropology.

Generally, the kinds of questions anthropologists have posed about tourism have come from one of two stages in what has been called the "touristic process" (Nash 1981). Simply put, the touristic process is the flow of travelers from a "tourist generating" site, like the United States or Europe, to a travel destination, usually in some "periphery" country (Jafari 1977; for a critical discussion of how this flow has reversed in the age of "ex-primitives" and "postmoderns," see MacCannell 1992). Viewing tourism in this vector-like manner, researchers have typically examined the origins of tourism on one end, and the impacts of tourism on the other. Questions concerning the origins of tourism have included what makes a person a tourist, what motivates tourists to travel, and what determines the kinds of places and experiences tourists seek? Inquiries on the impacts of tourism have generally focused on the range of socioeconomic, psychological, cultural, and environmental changes that tourism has caused in host destinations.

## ORIGINS OF TOURISM

Despite its relevance to people almost everywhere, anthropologists have had a hard time defining tourism (Cohen 1974, Nash 1981). Essentially, a tourist is "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" (Smith 1989, p. 2). One topic of interest among scholars of tourism has been to trace the motives, social profiles, and activities of these "leisured persons" over time. Who are they? Where have they traveled, and what have they been seeking? (Pearce 1982). A recent historical overview comes from Lofgren (1999). The pages read much like a travelogue as Lofgren takes his readers on a tour of the Western holiday world, from the Grand Tour routes of the eighteenth century, to the "global beaches" of today. His goal is to show how two centuries of leisure travel have taught us to be tourists and to move, often according to social dictate, through different types of "vacationscapes."

The things tourists do and the experiences they seek have changed over time, just as they have varied from country to country, and across social categories of class, gender, and race. Several tourism scholars have sought to explain the psychosocial motives for some of these variations. MacCannell (1976) proposed that by following in the footsteps of tourists, one can begin to understand the value systems of the modern world. In fact, by taking tourists as his subject, MacCannell's purpose was to craft "an ethnography of modern society." Modernity, for MacCannell, is characterized by feelings of alienation, fragmentation, and superficiality. The search for authentic experiences is a reflection of modern tourists' desire to reconnect with "the pristine, the primitive, the natural, that which is as yet untouched by modernity" (Cohen 1988, p. 374; see also Dobkin de Rios 1994, Harkin 1995, Redfoot 1984).

Especially evocative in MacCannell's work is the idea that tourism can serve as a unifying force in modern societies, bringing people together to define collectively the places, events, and symbols that are deemed important and somehow

meaningful (i.e., “not to be missed”). These might include the Grand Canyon, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Eiffel Tower. The act of seeing these “in person” and then sharing the experience with others through photographs, souvenirs, and stories allows tourists to reassemble the disparate pieces of their otherwise fragmented lives. Through tourism, then, life and society can appear to be an orderly series of representations, like snapshots in a family album (but see Lippard 1999). Indeed, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) has interpreted the ways in which tourism stages and displays the world as a museum of itself. By touring the sites of this global “museum” tourists can ultimately affirm and reinforce what they think they already know about the world (Bruner 1991).

In a similar vein, Graburn (1989) characterized tourism as a kind of ritual process that reflects society’s deeply held values about health, freedom, nature, and self-improvement. In this view, vacations can be interpreted as the modern, secular equivalent of the annual festivals and pilgrimages in more traditional, religious societies. Drawing on Durkheim, Graburn analyzed the ritual function of tourism in society, especially its role in building and maintaining a collective consciousness. The totems in the modern ritual of tourism appear on the pages of guidebooks, on websites, and on the surfaces of our souvenirs. Through the collective reverence of these totems, tourists are able to strengthen their connection to each other as well as to the larger society.

Turner & Turner (1978) theorized that leisure travel is indeed like a pilgrimage, one that can lift people out of the ordinary structures of their everyday lives. Tourism can offer freedom from work and other obligatory time, an escape from traditional social roles, and the liberty to spend one’s time however one chooses. Like other ritual activities, tourism ushers its participants to a state of liminality, or unstructured “time out of time.” In this way, modern tourism reflects the “antistructure” of life, an escape from something, rather than a quest for something (Turner 1969, 1982). Here then, the importance of authenticity is diminished as an explanation for what motivates tourists to travel (Bruner 1991).

In other studies related to the origins of tourism, anthropologists have sought to explain why some kinds of tourism arise in particular types of societies (Cohen 1972). In this line of research, tourism is conceptualized as a superstructural phenomenon, dependent on a range of material factors (Nash 1996). The question becomes what particular social, political, and environmental conditions in any given society give rise to certain types of leisure travel or particular types of tourists (Crandall 1980, Dann 1981)? What is it about Japanese society, for example, that compels its people to favor sightseeing in large groups?

## Assessing Local Choices and Constraints

Though anthropologists have delved into the factors that motivate tourists to travel, they have trained less attention on examining the conditions under which people in host destinations become involved in tourism. A first step in filling this gap would be first to recognize that not all people in a host destination participate in tourism

equally. Some members of a local area may participate directly, interacting with tourists on a regular basis as guides, performers, or artisans, whereas others may become involved only behind the scenes, working as support staff or as wholesalers of foods and supplies. From an economic perspective, local hosts will also differ in terms of how much time and energy they invest in tourism: Some will work as full-time wage laborers, whereas others will contract their labor occasionally or earn cash only through the sale of goods.

In teasing apart differences in how local hosts participate—or choose not to participate—in tourism, we may begin to analyze the range of factors that determine who gets involved, why, and in what ways. Only by asking these latter questions can we explore what tourism determines in people's lives and what factors in people's lives define their connection with tourism.

From case studies, we know that gender is one important variable that determines who within a host community participates in tourism. Swain (1989) found that gender roles among the Kuna Indians of Panama have shaped the local response to tourism. Specifically, Kuna women have produced mola artwork of fabric appliqué, thus maintaining a marketable image of ethnicity to tourists, while Kuna men control the political decisions that determine Kuna interactions with tourism. Wilkinson & Pratiwi (1995) found that women in an Indonesian village could not be involved in tourist guiding because it was not regarded favorably by villagers, the connotation being that women were perceived as prostitutes interested in contacting foreign tourists. Levy & Lerch (1991) learned more generally that women tend to work in less-stable, lower-paid, and lower-level jobs in the tourism industry of Barbados. Gender stereotypes can also result in women being the first ones in a host community contracted to work in tourism. Kinnaird & Hall (1994) found that the involvement of women in tourism in Ireland has been accepted in a society where, historically, women's work has been linked to the roles of wife, mother, and caretaker of others.

Assessing gender differences in how hosts participate in tourism is a step toward improving our understanding of the origins of tourism from the hosts' perspective (Swain 1995). However, many questions remain in terms of why and under what conditions local residents may choose to, or may be driven to, become involved in tourism. Our understanding would also improve if we examined the extent to which hosts act as decision-makers in shaping the kinds of tourism that will take place in their own communities.

The recommendation I make here is not new. In 1981, Nash suggested that while a local society may unavoidably be affected by tourism "it also may play a significant role in determining the kind of tourists it receives and the form of tourism they practice" (p. 462). Similarly, Chambers (1999) has pointed out that "too often we regard the local communities and regions that receive tourists as being the passive recipients of a tourist dynamic" (p. x), adding that our attempts to understand tourism solely on the basis of the motives and behaviors of tourists, "is certain to leave us with only a partial appreciation for what tourism has come to represent in our time" (p. 22).

## IMPACTS OF TOURISM

In examining the impacts of tourism, anthropologists have often been devoted to writing ethnographic accounts of how tourism has affected host communities in a wide range of Western and non-Western settings (Jafari 1990). In general, anthropologists have conceptualized tourism as determining the fate of hosts in many ways, such as whether they will develop economically or not, whether they will feel pride or shame about themselves and their traditions, or whether they will have incentives to protect or destroy their environment.

Rarely have scholars' opinions about the effects of tourism on host communities been positive. Rossel's (1988, p. 1) comment that "tourists wreak havoc over the face of the social and cultural landscape" aptly reflects the overall sentiment from anthropologists. Indeed, as Crick noted, tourism has been blamed "for every value transformation under the sun" (1989, p. 308). An overarching disdain for tourism was especially prevalent in the years before ecotourism and other forms of alternative tourism gained recognition.

### Economic Change

The pessimism about tourism has not been shared by all social scientists. Particularly during the 1970s, but also to some extent today (see Schwartz 1997), economists enthusiastically promoted tourism as an ideal strategy for development. Multilateral lending agencies funded touristic infrastructure in the Third World as a way to increase foreign exchange earnings and raise gross national product per capita. Especially in the so-called sand, sun, and sea regions, tourism was seen as having limitless growth potential (Crick 1989). As aid money was channeled south, the modernizationists of the 1970s applauded tourism as a powerful catalyst for helping the Caribbean and other places "take off" into flourishing service-based economies.

Despite the early hopes, tourism as a "passport" to macroeconomic development did not pan out quite as planned (de Kadt 1979). Rather than alleviate poverty, tourism seemed to be introducing new kinds of social problems, including currency black markets, drugs, and prostitution (see Oppermann 1998). In addition, tourism was associated with luxury spending, overcrowding, and pollution, all of which were compounding environmental degradation (Honey 1999). Meanwhile, the kinds of infrastructure governments and aid agencies were investing in—golf courses and high-rise hotels—were doing little to alleviate the educational, health, and welfare needs of local populations (Richter 1982). All the while, profits from tourism were being siphoned off to industry leaders in developed countries (Crick 1989). In short, tourism had become a vanguard of neocolonialism (Nash 1989).

At the level of the local economy, anthropologists were learning that tourism was wreaking other kinds of havoc. For one, wage labor opportunities created through tourism were disrupting subsistence activities of small producers.



Ethnographic case studies from host destinations around the world showed that wage labor introduced through tourism raises the opportunity costs of subsistence activities. Oliver-Smith (1989) described a case in Spain in which local hosts substituted their labor in farming with work in tourism. Mansperger (1995) analyzed how tourism among Pacific islanders led to the cessation of subsistence activities and made locals more dependent on the outside world. Seiler-Baldinger's (1988) research in the Upper Amazon attributed declines in health among locals to the fact that they moved away from subsistence activities to work in tourism. Rosenberg (1988) argued that tourism contributed to the demise of agriculture in a small mountain village in France, where grazing animals came to be used mainly for clearing ski slopes. The disruption of subsistence activities was not necessarily a problem in itself, but it became a problem when the flow of tourists was reduced, and people were left with no economic alternatives from which to sustain themselves. Unfortunately, this was (and still is) a relatively common phenomenon because the tourism industry is especially prone to boom-bust cycles.

A second problem anthropologists found with tourism-fueled development is that it often leads to increased wealth stratification in host communities, ultimately sparking or exacerbating social conflict. Among the Yapese, Mansperger found "the Chief is not sharing the entrance fees to the village . . . and money is making people stingy, therefore harming community spirit" (1995, p. 90). Vickers (1997) related a similar story among the Siona and Secoya of Ecuador, in which some individuals were working as native entrepreneurs, guiding tourists with outboard motors and even constructing their own lodges. Problems arose when those showing the most entrepreneurial spirit were perceived as seeking personal enrichment without regard for the welfare of the group. In these cases, as in many others, tourism seemed to contribute to increased social stratification and conflict.

Though the literature in the anthropology of tourism currently includes excellent descriptions of what can go wrong when tourism is introduced into local communities, the analysis so far has been strangely devoid of local voices. We have learned relatively little about how locals themselves perceive the array of pros and cons associated with tourism. Often our assumptions have been that locals were duped into accepting tourism rather than having consciously chosen such an option for themselves. Compounding the absence of local perspective has been a lack of rigor in terms of analyzing the pure effect of tourism on new problems and/or improvements in host communities. Although it may be true that tourism precipitates conflict in host communities, it also may be true that other factors in any given destination site, such as the construction of a road, or the proclamation of a new protected area, have caused conflicts. In general, anecdotal case studies of tourism often suffer the problem of reversed causality. For example, although tourism may cause increased wealth stratification in some communities, perhaps people who live in places where wealth differences are already marked are somehow more likely to become involved in tourism.

## Social and Cultural Change

In addition to economic development, intercultural contact and the changes that result from it have been an especially pervasive theme in studying the impacts of tourism (Nash 1996). An early example came from Nuñez (1963, p. 347), who described tourism as a “laboratory situation” for testing how acculturation occurs when urban tourists representing “donor” cultures interact with host populations in “recipient” cultures. Though anthropologists may shy away from the now politicized term acculturation, the concept behind it is still present in public and academic discourses on tourism in indigenous communities. Acculturation is what many fear will happen with the intrusion of tourists, consumerism, and the “commodification of culture” (e.g., Chicchón 1995, McLaren 1997, Rossel 1988, Seiler-Baldinger 1988).

“Commodification of culture” has been used to describe a process by which things come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (Cohen 1988). Greenwood (1977) used the concept of commodification in association with tourism to describe how the *alarde* festival in the Basque town of Fuenterrabia lost its cultural and symbolic meaning to locals once it had been opened to tourists and marketed like any other commodity. The concern among many tourism scholars has been whether a cultural item or ritual loses meaning for locals once it has been commodified. Does the item become material property of the highest bidder rather than a spiritually, ceremonially, or in some other way significant artifact of the host culture? In applying this question to Australian Aboriginal bark paintings, Hall (1994), for example, found that once the paintings had been marketed to international consumers, they were uprooted from their traditional social and cultural context, and thus lost significance for locals. Picard (1990) asserted that Balinese culture has been so commodified that the distinction between what is Balinese and what is attributable to tourism is no longer clear, even to the Balinese themselves.

Often entangled in discussions of commodification is the idea that people in host destinations will lose their cultural identity as a result of tourism. Many worry that tourism may cause hosts to forget their past or “lose their culture” as they adopt the new lifestyles and ways of being they learn from outsiders. Erisman has argued that the massive influx of foreign goods, people, and ideas to rural host destinations has a negative impact, which, ultimately, “erodes people’s self-esteem” (1983, p. 350). In this view, tourism can lead to a kind of “cultural dependency” in which local people gain economic benefits, but only as they are catering to the needs of outsiders. Loss of identity occurs in this scenario as the local economy improves and hosts begin to act and think like tourists, whom they perceive as superior in every way. In other studies as well, commodities have been seen as an especially corruptive force among indigenous peoples. Reed (1995) noted that commodities are perceived as pulling people “deeper into the dark vortex of commercial activities and spewing them out on the other side of the ethnic boundary into the harsh light of national societies and the international economy” (p. 137).

Other scholars perceive tourism as affecting local identity through the conveyance of expectations. According to this view, tourists shape the outcome of touristic encounters by giving preference to locals who look and behave in ways that are authentically indigenous or ethnic. A problem here is that authenticity is a subjective concept, and tourists often define for themselves what is authentic, relying on popular stereotypes as points of reference rather than on historical or ethnographic facts (Adams 1984, Crick 1989). Boorstin (1964) described encounters between tourists and locals as "pseudo-events" that are based on what tourists choose to see rather than on what is really there. What tourists choose to see is, in turn, strongly influenced by the marketing efforts of tour operators (Silver 1993), the popular media (Urry 1990), and the state (Volkman 1990). In an analysis of travel brochures, Rossel (1988, p. 5) found "exaggerations, misleading statements, and lies" that provided a certain way of understanding the reality, and that offered the "tourist view." Adams (1984, p. 470) has argued that brochures and travel agents essentially provide tourists with a first glimpse of the locals through "prepackaged ethnic stereotypes," which later are either reified or dismantled during the tourists' journeys. Especially in developing countries, the state has also played a key role in framing ethnicity for tourism, partly as a way to build national solidarity, and partly as a strategy to attract foreign tourists (Matthews & Richter 1991).

In theory, tourists' stereotypes are transmitted to locals through what Urry (1990, 1996) has called "the tourist gaze." A simplistic rendering of this idea is that tourists wield power through the way they look at locals and expect them to appear and behave. In turn, locals acquiesce to the gaze by mirroring back images they hope will please tourists. The long-term implication is that locals will maintain, or at least act out, traditions they are sure will satisfy and attract more tourists. MacCannell (1984) has referred to this process as "reconstructing ethnicity." Indeed, locals may consciously try to match visitors' expectations of what is authentic, even if the results seem contrived or fake. Evans-Pritchard (1989) wrote of a Native American woman who felt she had to "look 'Indian' in order to be accepted as authentic by the tourists on whose dollars she depends" (p. 97). Cohen (1979, p. 18) described locals who "play the natives" to live up to the tourists' image.

This "playing up" has not always been described by anthropologists as a negative trend. If the tourist gaze does indeed have power to act as a mirror and, ultimately, transform the identity of the people gazed on, then, some scholars argue, tourism has as much potential to revive old values as it does to destroy them. Smith (1982), for example, has found that tourism may "serve to reinforce ethnic identity" (p. 26). Also, Mansperger (1995) suggested that tourism "can help native people maintain their identity" (p. 92). Van den Berghe (1994) wrote that tourism can lead to "a renaissance of native cultures or the recreation of ethnicity" (p. 17). Tourism then can become an empowering vehicle of self-representation, and locals may purposely choose to reinvent themselves through time, modifying how they are seen and perceived by different groups of outsiders (Cohen 1988).

Two studies from the 1980s exemplify well how locals may consciously alter their appearance to please tourists. In one, Gamper (1981) found that people in southern Austria began to change their clothes for tourism. In normal routines, locals were wearing outfits typical of any other place in Europe, but during the tourist season, people became conscious of the need to don traditional costumes. Yet even the costumes were adjusted. Though originally brown, black, and white, a bright red vest was added later because, as one informant explained, “[r]ed looks better on Kodachrome” (p. 439). In another study, Albers & James (1983) examined 600 postcard images of Native Americans issued between 1900 and 1970. They discovered that the images changed with the growth of tourism in the American West, and that representations of Indians were increasingly tailored to match tourists’ expectations. The most striking change was the disappearance of images that showed Indians in their normal surroundings and everyday dress. Increasingly, the pictures conformed to a stereotypic image, “derived from the equestrian, buffalo-hunting, and tipi-dwelling Indians of the nineteenth century” (p. 136) (see also Mamiya 1992).

## Turning Back the Gaze

Anthropologists have argued that host-guest interactions tend to be asymmetrical in terms of power, and that guests have the upper hand in determining how any given encounter will unfold. Further, ethnographic accounts have shown that the gaze of tourists can be especially influential in determining how hosts look, behave, and feel. Generally, hosts are portrayed in these interactions as passive, unable to influence events, as if they themselves were somehow physically locked in the gaze. Missing in these analyses is the possibility that locals can, and often do, play a role in determining what happens in their encounters with tourists. A notable exception is found in the ethnographic work of Silverman (2001), who has consciously foregrounded the abilities of the Iatmul people of Papua New Guinea “to act with intention and strategy,” and to exercise creativity in the context of their interactions with outsiders (p. 105).

Also missing from many current analyses is an attempt to learn more about the dynamics of host-guest interactions by observing and talking with people on both sides of the encounter. Evans-Pritchard (1989) noted that academics have largely ignored the subject of how locals perceive outsiders. Although a vast literature exists on the subject of local responses to social changes wrought by tourists, relatively few studies have explored the attitudes and ideas of local residents toward outsiders.

Kincaid (1988) took an important step toward filling the gap by writing plainly and explicitly about her anger and resentment toward tourists who visit the Caribbean island of Antigua. Kincaid is an Antiguan herself, and her prose emanates from an insiders’ perspective. It is not surprising that her depiction of Antigua is at odds with the ones often found in tourism brochures. She writes, “[T]he Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist,

would see now” (1988, p. 23). With acerbic wit, she assures Antigua’s visitors, “[Y]ou needn’t let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday” (p. 10). It is strange that comments such as these from people in host destinations, though laden with meaning, are largely absent from the literature.

In her own research, Evans-Pritchard found that Native Americans often use ethnic-based humor to ridicule tourists, burlesquing outsiders by “exaggerating the already overblown stereotypes of a group” (1989, p. 96; see also Laxson 1991). In another study, Howell (1994) observed that locals can reap enjoyment from toying with tourists who are “relatively ignorant of local conditions, and thus often appear incompetent, ridiculous, gullible, and eminently exploitable” (p. 152). In addition to “toying with tourists,” locals may be active agents in determining what they want to preserve, purposely inventing traditions and/or folk art for tourists, yet entirely cognizant themselves of what is real or staged, authentic or spurious. Evans-Pritchard (1989) learned that Indian silversmiths often use traditional figures and symbols to create the right aesthetic effect for their pieces. Yet they also make up stories about the art, consciously capitalizing on the tourists’ hopes to find meaning and cultural significance in everything they see. This enterprising behavior seems to contradict the notion that locals are passive victims, caught unaware as they lose themselves and their culture to commodification and the intrusive gaze of outsiders.

Even in cases where local hosts are changing aspects of their identity or their lives to appeal to tourists, they may not necessarily be losing their culture or their ability to judge for themselves what is spurious and genuine. To the contrary, local hosts may feel empowered by interactions with outsiders to redefine who they are and what aspects of their identity they wish to highlight or downplay. In the midst of reviving the past or inventing traditions, locals may be quite conscious of the fact that they are presenting cultural displays to tourists and not exposing the truly meaningful symbols and rituals of their private and “backstage” lives.

Davis (1997) used ethnographic methods to reveal how Sea World produces very carefully controlled experiences and images for visitors. In adopting a hosts’ perspective—in this case, a large corporate host—Davis has presented a potential model for how other researchers might explore tourism in smaller host communities around the world. Questions might include, What are locals consciously doing to manipulate certain kinds of images or evoke particular feelings among their guests? An example of this kind of work is Adams (1995), who has examined how the Torajan people of Indonesia have manipulated tourism for their own political ends. For years, the Torajans have been studied and scrutinized both by tourists and anthropologists. Adams found that the local response to such global attention has been to capitalize on it as a means to achieve local objectives. Appropriately, Adams describes the Torajans as “active strategists” and “ingenious cultural politicians” in the context of tourism.

With only a few exceptions, research in the anthropology of tourism has overlooked the origins and motivations of tourism from the hosts' perspective. Although many anthropologists have eloquently portrayed the ways in which tourism has changed the lives of locals, we have neglected to turn the analysis around and to imagine how hosts might be affecting guests. This trend may change as we shift away from assuming that tourism is always imposed on passive and powerless people. Even in cases where the forced and exploitative nature of tourism is irrefutable, we may begin to probe more deeply into understanding how locals themselves are perceiving the imposition, rather than continuing to rely on our own perspectives as anthropologists.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM

In the 1970s and 1980s, review articles on the study of tourism often asked why anthropologists were avoiding tourism as a legitimate subject of analysis. Today, the question might be the opposite: Why are anthropologists paying so much attention to alternative forms of tourism? Especially in the past decade, tourism has gained a much more positive reputation among social scientists, environmental conservationists, development practitioners, and indigenous rights activists. This is because an expanding group of new tourism companies, often in partnership with nongovernmental organizations, now claims to go easy on the environment and on indigenous peoples, even as they strive for profit. These companies label their excursions variously as "ecotourism," "community-based tourism," "cultural tourism," or simply "alternative tourism."

Generally defined, alternative tourism includes "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values, and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences" (Eadington & Smith 1992, p. 3). This new brand of tourism has grabbed the attention of scholars concerned with recent agendas to link conservation and development (e.g., Guillen 1998, Lamont 1999, Sills 1998, Stronza 2000, Wildes 1998). At least a couple of new journals, including the *Journal of Ecotourism* and the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, have begun to focus on the possibilities and limitations of alternative tourism. In general, the literature seems more balanced than did earlier research on tourism. At least anthropologists are not automatically condemning the impacts of tourism on local communities. If anything, perhaps the scale has tilted in the other direction. Now the tendency seems to be to applaud tourism as a panacea for achieving a wide array of social, economic, and environmental goals. Munt (1994) observed that "[w]hile mass tourism has attracted trenchant criticism as a shallow and degrading experience for Third World host nations and peoples, new tourism practices have been viewed benevolently" (p. 50).

Ecotourism has gained a lion's share of the attention aimed at alternative travel. An early publication on ecotourism commissioned by the U.S.-based environmental group, Conservation International, identified ecotourism as "a form of tourism

inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures" (Ziffer 1989). In the ideal scenario, ecotourists' nonconsumptive use of and appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of an area can contribute attention and revenue to local conservation efforts while also providing economic opportunities to local residents (Sherman & Dixon 1991). This linkage of goals has also meant that the applied research of anthropologists has become critical to the planning and implementation of tourism projects around the world.

Conservationists are both optimistic and skeptical that ecotourism may help protect nature while meeting the economic needs of local residents (Barkin 1996, Boo 1990, Cater & Lowman 1994, Honey 1999, Lindberg 1991, Lindberg & Enriquez 1994, Orams 1999, Whelan 1991). Relative to other activities, such as hunting, logging, or agriculture, ecotourism seems to have a low impact on ecosystems (Groom et al 1991, Kusler 1991), and ideally revenues from ecotourism may be channeled into conservation and local development needs. But critics counter that too much ecotourism, particularly if it is unmonitored and unregulated, may spoil natural areas and disturb both wildlife and people (Begley 1996, Giannecchini 1993). Some also fear that the rhetoric of ecotourism is a guise for business as usual. Vickers (1997) has stressed that "much of what passes for 'ecotourism' is comprised of business ventures whose aim is to maximize the profits of tourist agencies and professional guides" (p. 1). The implication is that the quest for profits occludes any intention to protect nature or improve the lives of local people.

In the midst of the debates over the good and bad of ecotourism, the themes of local participation and local ownership of touristic infrastructure have assumed new importance (Eadington & Smith 1992). Increasingly, local communities are joining in partnerships with government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private tour companies to plan tourism strategies and develop new attractions for visitors. As a result, local hosts are gaining much more control over how tourism affects their communities.

Despite the new attention on alternative tourism and local decision making in tourism, the same conceptual and analytical weakness found in studies on conventional tourism remain. Advocates of ecotourism, for example, are focused on the notion that appropriate kinds of tourism will lead to positive impacts for local communities and ecosystems, and that particular touristic inputs will result in the most desirable outcomes both for people and natural areas. The ecotourism literature is filled with guidelines and "best practices" for achieving success (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996). A collection of papers presented at the Yale School of Forestry's Conference on Ecotourism (Miller & Malek-Zadeh 1996), for example, focused on "strategies" and "parameters of success" for developing ecotourism projects. The ideas are generally prescriptive, arguing that if the ecotourism industry were to provide the right inputs, such as "a participatory approach," then the negative impacts of tourism on local hosts could be reduced. The emphasis remains, however, on what is external to a site, rather than on what the existing conditions might reveal about whether tourism will have a positive or negative impact on local residents.

Just as we lack an understanding of how hosts participate in the origins of conventional tourism, we also know relatively little about how and why local hosts get involved in ecotourism. Although locals may not be financing new infrastructure or negotiating directly with international travel agencies, they are nevertheless affecting what happens on the ground in many ecotourism sites. In cases where locals are opposed to ecotourism, for example, they may express their opposition by vandalizing infrastructure. Also, by hunting or clearing trails in areas around an ecolodge, locals can sabotage the image of pristine nature many ecotourism lodges promote. Bennett (1999) described a case in Panama in which members of the Kuna protested outsiders' investment in tourism by burning a hotel twice, and attacking one of the hotel owners. Belsky (1999) wrote about a similar example in the village of Maya Center in Belize, where the locals burned a handicraft center.

Local residents can also decide the fate of an ecotourism operation by playing competitor companies off on each other, setting the conditions under which they will tolerate or welcome the influx of tourists. If several companies are competing for the same acceptance of a community, they may become involved in battles over who can provide the best benefits, a situation in which the locals are determining, to some extent, the operating costs of the companies. In these ways, local hosts can influence the success or failure of tourism, regardless of the external inputs and intentions of outsider consultants.

## From Both Sides Now

In current efforts to make tourism participatory and to involve local residents as decision makers in tourism projects, anthropologists can make a significant contribution to the field by focusing more attention on the reasons local residents choose to, or are able to, become involved in tourism. This information will be important if we consider that the right external inputs are probably necessary, but not sufficient for ensuring the benefits of tourism for locals. Prevailing conditions, such as the structure of local political and economic institutions, ethnic relations, gender stereotypes, and the subsistence labor obligations of local would-be hosts may be particularly relevant.

A few scholars have already advanced hypotheses about local conditions most conducive to successful community based tourism. For example, Smith (1989) wrote, "Tourism is especially favored where significant segments of the population have minimal education or technical skills, inasmuch as other industries may require extensive training" (p. xi). In 1996, King & Stewart (1996) hypothesized that "[p]ositive impacts of ecotourism are likely to be the greatest when the indigenous culture is already in a state of decline as a result of natural resources scarcity" (p. 299). These are precisely the kinds of assumptions we may want to explore in the future. Although we now have many solid descriptive analyses of what happens when tourism is introduced to communities, we lack comparison across sites to analyze both the internal and external factors that determine why we find certain kinds of interactions with tourism in particular settings.



As with conventional tourism, we also lack information about the impacts of ecotourism on tourists. Researchers have invested considerable effort into the impacts of ecotourism on hosts, and much hope is pinned on the possibility that ecotourism will provide the economic incentive for hosts to maintain and protect the natural sites and cultural traditions tourists come to see. Less effort has been invested in analyzing the incentives ecotourism offers to tourists to change their own perspectives and behaviors. This gap in the research exists despite the fact that a significant goal of ecotourism is to raise environmental and cultural awareness among tourists.

We do not know, for example, what kinds of travel heightens consciousness or educates people in particular ways. We do know a lot about how tourists feel in terms of their accommodations—most companies request posttravel evaluations—but we do not know how their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors change as a result of what they have seen in host destinations. We could ask many questions related to this issue. For example, do ecotourists consider running less tap water at home once they have seen how difficult it is for people to collect water in remote destinations they have visited? Do they begin to recycle more often? More fundamentally, do their values change? What kinds of impressions are generated from different kinds of touristic experiences? How can tourism and recreation be linked more explicitly with learning? Despite the relevance of these questions to the goals of alternative tourism, we are lacking studies that track the attitudes, much less the behaviors, of tourists before and after they have traveled to a host site. Two models for how we might proceed come from Orams (1997) and Jacobson (1995).

## CONCLUSION

I have discussed the reasons tourism can be a fascinating subject of study for anthropologists. Despite its association with things shallow and frivolous, tourism is relevant to many theoretical and real-world issues in anthropology. For people in host destinations, tourism is often the catalyst of significant economic and social change, the context for cross-cultural encounters, and the stage-like setting for displays and recreations of culture and tradition. For the tourists, tourism can be a ritual form of escape from the structure of everyday life, or it can represent a symbolic quest for the kinds of authentic experiences that elude modern society. For anthropologists, tourism can be a lens through which to explore issues of political economy, social change and development, natural resource management, and cultural identity and expression. Current scholarship on tourism is somewhat lopsided. In examining the origins of tourism—what motivates tourists to travel, and what determines where they go—anthropologists have focused significant attention on tourists, almost to the exclusion of locals. As a result, we know little about the motivations of people in host destinations to become involved in tourism, or to promote certain kinds of tourism over others. Too often, we have assumed that tourism is imposed on hosts rather than invited.

In exploring the impacts of tourism, anthropologists have tilted in the opposite direction. Researchers have analyzed extensively, usually by way of ethnography, the impacts of tourism on hosts, and we have many case studies describing the effects of tourism on the economy and on the cultural identity of hosts. But we are lacking information about the impacts tourism can have on guests. Too often, we have assumed that hosts are relatively passive and that their disadvantaged position under the powerful gaze of tourists precludes locals from shaping the encounters with tourists.

An interest in alternative forms of tourism, particularly ecotourism, has boomed in recent years. Proponents have posited that the participation of local residents can be critical to maximizing economic, environmental, and social benefits of tourism. Despite this attention to the active role of local residents, researchers tend to emphasize the importance of external inputs, rather than on the prevailing motivations or constraints of locals, to enhance the success of tourism. Advocates for ecotourism have also suggested that tourism can be educational for tourists, and that the right kinds of touristic experiences can result in increased environmental awareness and cultural sensitivity among tourists. Although we are optimistic about the possibility of raising consciousness through tourism, few scholars have analyzed how tourists' attitudes actually do change as a result of particular kinds of experiences.

The goal of future anthropological research in tourism should be to fill the gaps in our current understanding. We should know the full story of what happens to both hosts and guests throughout all stages of their journeys and cross-cultural interactions. This will be especially true as we strive to develop the kinds of tourism that can generate a range of benefits for hosts as well as educational and transformative experiences for guests.

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