

**Local, Just and Sustainable Eco-tourism:
decommodifying grass roots struggle against a neoliberal tourism agenda**

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Abstract

For almost thirty years neoliberalism has been the ascendant political ideology and policy agenda of the Global North, and has increasingly underpinned the economies and development work of the Global South. We will focus on the possibilities in more decommodified agendas of eco-tourism as redressing through national and local agendas the hegemony of neoliberalism in tourist markets that affect host and indigenous communities. A range of international case examples will be drawn upon. The Global North's power, wealth and need for social inequality means that local contexts will come under the reach and governance of neo-liberal ideas and practices. Nonetheless struggles over social identity and activism for social justice based in ecotour examples can help to challenge the dominance of neoliberalism and change the basis of exchange and interaction in communities beyond a post/neo-colonial subjectivity. We hope to encourage North sponsored volunteers and community based projects of eco-tourism with support from their national and local governments that can resist 'from below' and challenge the new fetishism of touristic commodities encouraged by 'free market neoliberalism' from above.

Introduction

“Nature Travels is the UK specialist for responsible travel to Sweden. We work together with small-scale, locally owned partner companies in Sweden to offer a wide range of ecotourism experiences, from wilderness canoeing to dog sledding tours to log cabin holidays. All are active members of the Swedish Ecotourism Society, an organisation committed to minimising the impact of tourism on the natural environment, and 17 are independently certified by a body comprising the Swedish Ecotourism Society, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and Visit Sweden...”

(Nature Travels Web page accessed 4/4/11 at <http://naturetravels.wordpress.com>)

It is not surprising that an advanced welfare state such as Sweden has significantly decommodified social policies and also demonstrates some of the community based ideals and best local practices of an ethical and socially just ecotourism. The areas covered for Swedish certification include animal welfare, waste and resource management, use of local goods and services and use of fuel-efficient and sustainable transport alternatives. There are also limitations on the capacities of local economies and communities to resist, challenge and in some cases robustly respond to the imperatives of neoliberalism. Alternative ecotourism development is not the same as alternative social development because the tourist/client is dependent on highly unregulated market forces to sustain tourism (Salole 2007). The impact of market principles on small scale tour operators and hosts cannot be ignored in the drive for profits. Nonetheless, global capitalism has a way of delivering paradoxical movements to the modes of profit making, competition amongst economic interest and production that reflect the neoliberal agenda. Our arguments here suggest that there is some dynamic for countermovement from local operators and hosts to such economic globalisation to drive decommodified agendas in ecotourism.

This chapter will conceptualise a socio-political project that seeks to deliver social justice for grass roots communities involved in eco-tourism and challenge the ideology and practice of neo-liberalism in various local contexts and local economies. Neoliberalism re-intensifies the older liberal projects of *individualism* - - citizens as supposedly free from government intervention-- and *marketisation* -

markets are the best way to enable individual autonomy and efficient economic outcomes -- in the strategic form usually of privatisation and free trade. It is important to remember that neoliberal governance provides external controls managed by powerful stakeholders that commonly justify their mission in these broad principles. The processes for governing are then commonly created as internal tasks for government programs and market based companies in measures such as greater economic efficiency, lower award wages, and individual work contracts. These are measures that embrace market or quasi market 'blind faith' in the capacity of markets to set prices and determine the quality of the product, amongst other supposed outcomes that match economy, efficiency and effectiveness against each other. These are the fundamentals of neoliberalism that work their ideological norms as the natural economic order into many and varied market systems today.

Neoliberal Hegemony in a Global World

The relations between capital and labour in the West is such that labour is outsourced and capital 'takes flight' to find cheaper labour in the Third World. The nature of the loads given to Third World countries during the 1982 and onwards by commercial banks and multilevel agencies has locked these countries into a global economic system that requires market liberation and an opening up to global capital to survive and enable such countries to repay the levels of debt (Robinson 2004). How this political economy impacts on the South's emerging sites of ecotourism and 'who benefits' from these relations is what is at stake here. All of these 'hard' neoliberal agendas create the necessary environment for commodification of social relations increasing the grip of international capital – read the global ruling class centred in the USA and transnational companies--and work to expand the reach of globalisation into communities and individual lives.

Such global dominance remains ever-present whether perceived as exploitative or beneficial to these communities. We also note the recent literature that points to the complex issues of indigenous and grass roots tourism across rich and poor countries (Butler & Hinch Eds 2007, Connell, & Rugendyke, Eds, 2008) The importance for an eco-politics of 'grass root

struggle' and social justice is to oppose neoliberal development, negotiate new socio-political spaces in local communities and find a balance between equitable resource distribution, conservation values and sustainable ecotourism. We argue in conclusion that socially just ecotourism is sustainable tourism for 'grass roots communities'.

The theoretical and historical significance of neoliberal ideology is difficult to gauge and often underestimated in ecotourism studies. It is important to make analytic and practical distinctions between social and economic policies and programs that support neoliberal ideology and those that do not. There can be a tendency to overgeneralise and over-determine the power of neoliberalism. This general definition is useful to see the reach of the ideology and practice:

'it is not difficult to recognise the beast when it trespasses into new territories, tramples upon the poor, undermines rights and entitlements, and defeats resistance, through a combination of domestic political, economic, legal, ideological and media pressures, backed up by international blackmail and military force if necessary' (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005: 2).

We add to the argument by suggesting that human agency as actions which free people from commodified ways of living i.e. as de-commodifying the social – takes a less deterministic view of the current crisis. In some cases of ecotourism and related activism rights and entitlements are asserted, resistance stands steady and political and social spaces are created for people to challenge economic globalisation and neoliberalism. This reiterates the importance of global civil society such as NGOs and other powerful actors in helping to challenge, humanize and support activism and protest amongst the poorest communities involved in ecotourism.

Below we consider both Peru and Vietnam as good examples even though they have not escaped the hegemony of global free market ideology. The rise of multinational companies and some argued multinational states (Robinson 2004) has escalated and driven economic liberalization and exploitation of the South. Below we will indicate that while grass roots struggles in host and indigenous communities over the appropriate use of nature and natural resources, and how

these struggles can lead to detrimental impacts on, as well as some positive benefits for, these communities. Part of this framework is to explore what has been done in communities and working with partners to overcome strong market forces and rhetoric that is ever ready to exploit local and host communities involved in ecotourism.

The following will provide some case examples of ecotourism and grass roots struggles mainly in the South that also resonate with eco-activism and struggle in the North. These will broadly illustrate some of the resistance and struggle that communities and more broadly various social classes such as the middle and working classes, and the non-working poor make in response to neoliberal policies on tourism.

‘What do Rich Countries Do?’ - *Sweden*

This can be illustrated by recent developments in Sweden as indicated above that has developed ecotours in relation to its wilderness, natural beauty and isolation. Nonetheless there are tensions between the government, the business elite and actors in civil society such as green groups and environmentalists. The Government’s recent call for culling and hunting the wolf in January 2011 brought about condemnation from both activists, ecotour companies and the European Union.

In modern universalist welfare states such as Sweden where most citizens have strong welfare entitlements there are also minorities groupings who live both socio-spatially and politically at the periphery of society. (see Ryan and Aicken Eds 2005). The example of the Sami and tourism across Northern Europe gives some extra understanding to both the constraints on indigenous communities and the potential for ecotour development. There are cultural norms and legal impediments for the Sami in Sweden to more fully embrace tourism as an income source. (Muller and Huuva 2009). Being on the periphery of Swedish society gives some ambivalence itself to market forces so that tourism develops either as a small scale independent venture or with input and assistance from international or national tour operators and other actors.

A similar set of conditions has emerged around ecotourism and Aboriginal culture and identity most notably in the Northern Territory of Australia. There is often a complicated nexus between welfare and tourism at the peripheries of these societies as low incomes are bound up with semi traditional communities and lifestyle. These places of tourist sites are also targets of 'welfare reform' and their populations seen as welfare dependent with associated White racist or classist stereotypes. For example, regional Australian Aboriginal communities are commonly depicted in the media as being dependent on alcohol and welfare benefits for their existence (Hollingshead 2007). Less visible in the Australian media are positive images of Aboriginal communities as proprietors, custodians and owners of key tourist and heritage areas such as Kakadu National Park or Uluru.

Ecotourism: A way Forward?

This section provides examples of how we can conceptualise a process that enables engagement that may then deliver social justice 'from below' enabled by state intervention and therefore a fairer economic share for grass roots communities involved in eco-tourism. In doing so, this challenges neo-liberal ideologies that dominate corporate tourism interests and power relations in local contexts and economies. Ecotourism by its nature suggests a symbolic or mutual relationship where the tourist is not given central priority but becomes an equal part of the system. This is not apparent in much of tourism that occurs in the developing countries and many developed countries, nor does it appear likely to occur in the future within current operating practices. Further, the tendency to ignore or exploit local culture to enhance tourist experience has seen conflict arise environmentally and culturally. Tourists have been conditioned to accept a structured experience often packaged by large operators with little understanding of the local natural and cultural resources.

The tourist development framework created can often relegate the people, their natural and cultural resources to a stage show or the backdrop for the tourism experience. This ignores the opportunity for cultural exchange, and forgoes understanding of the rich natural and cultural heritage that can be part of the tourist experience. Overcoming this problem takes us back to the underlying problems

inherent to development issues and tourism where this can be addressed with the use of a community development process that engages a wider spectrum of stakeholders in the process and is sensitive to host community cultural issues (Campbell 1999). By its nature, this process allows a more diverse spectrum of opportunities to be explored and in context to issues that may require detailed engagement at the local level. Wearing, & MacDonald (2002) explore this in PNG offering some insights into what the process revealed, the type of engagement regarded as meaningful and the outcomes from the process. A number of examples are now reviewed. They suggest that the relationship between intermediaries and rural and isolated area communities can be seen as a process involving many actions and participants' fields of knowledge, space – a continuous process where different social values meet and new meanings are created (Wearing, 1998).

The changing position and focus of some in the tourism industry has created, in some circumstances a movement away from predominance of western industrialized society's ownership and control of rural and isolated area tourism operations. However, the models of operations that have been represented to rural and isolated area communities has lead to a paradoxical problem; as rural and isolated area communities have very few other models than those of the dominant western models to operate within – tour operators then tend to treat their own communities as “other” to be exploited as part of the profit motive. However, due to changing discourses on the role of rural and isolated area communities and increased availability of economic access there are expanding opportunities for these communities to explore tourism as a business. These explorations will not simply materialize without a strategy of local engagement, awareness of cultural and resource capacity and a strategy to operationalise business or micro business opportunities.

Other examples of this engagement through ecotourism can be seen in cases such as Leksakundilok and Hirsch (2008) who outline engaging with host communities in developing ecotourism in Thailand. The research found that outcomes are improved for both the host communities and the visitors due to the involvement of the community in the process of establishing the activity. King and Steward (1996, p. 293) who suggest that to protect both people and their places, native people's

claim to control should be legitimized by conservation and government authorities, particularly indigenous people's role in technical management of the protected area. With respect to technical management, park authorities can learn a great deal from traditional land management practices.

The evolution of ecotourism has seen many failures and success but demonstrates that ecotourism, moves beyond just a merging of conservation with capitalism. It has demonstrated that it is able to embrace concern for the economic and social welfare of indigenous people, and at times, appears to portray ecotourism as a mechanism in allowing the engagement of grass roots communities in protecting their cultures (Farrell & Runyan 1991). In this sense, ecotourism has been presented as different from other kinds of tourism in that it claims to be controlled development that builds engagement and relationships between the tourism industry and other stakeholders such as those involved in protected areas and indigenous people.

Traditional Owners as ‘winners and losers’ in Australia & PNG.

Examples of how this engagement can be formulated can be found in the development of indigenous tourism businesses in Australia. Beyer, Anda, Elber, Revell, & Spring (2005) in looking at the development of remote tourism facilities finds that in the three case studies they engaged in that consultation with indigenous stakeholders lead to the success of the projects and that the development of criteria that engaged with other stakeholders was able to guide the “developer” in establishing a successful partnership with local indigenous cultural interests in a remote tourism facility development in a process that ensures cultural integrity and respect and understanding of the colonisation of ‘Aboriginal Australia’. Suggesting the engagement of indigenous cultural interests in the development process must be genuine and transparent and embrace the knowledge that cultural tourism is the only commercial use of land that can only be done by indigenous people. Finally maintaining that wherever possible the “developer” should be formed from the local and or regional Indigenous community, in whole or in part which tells us about new ways of doing (Beyer et al. 2005, p. 20).

It is interesting to note that in other areas of indigenous tourism businesses being developed we find where engagement of indigenous stakeholders measures of success are higher (Tremblay & Wegner 2009), Ali (2009) found that for the Brambuk Visitor/Cultural Centre which was a culmination of nearly a decade of consultation between a committee of five Aboriginal communities from the western district and various tourism and government agencies. The Aboriginal (Koori) communities were partners to this project included the Kirrae, the Whurang, the Goolum, the Gunditjmara and the Kerrup-Jmara, located in the South West Victoria and the Wimmera Regions. The outcome study found these communities were satisfied with how they were included and represented with the ecotourism industry and the tourist it was found were usually satisfied with the visit and the level of enjoyment experienced from the visit was very high. (Ali 2009, p. 26).

Aboriginal traditional owners and their representative local community organisations should be encouraged to take a more pro-active role in facilitating the development of their own tourism enterprises (Palmer 2001, p. i), Palmare's research has suggested that if Aboriginal communities and landowners wish to increase their direct involvement in the safari hunting and sports fishing industries the initial years of a business operation should be undertaken through a cooperative arrangement with an existing operator. In most instances, a joint venture approach, with operators who have pre-existing market experience is likely to be more commercially viable than if Aboriginal traditional owners are directly running operations themselves.

These examples suggest that through engagement and enablement we can find alternatives to the existing predominant models of doing tourism. A central concern in this process is the engagement of the "other" which moves beyond the current neoliberal management models and although there are many pitfalls in this approach it provides new directions for the future. Tourism management is driven by neoliberal economic imperatives where yield dominates the discourse (Dwyer et al. 2006). Academics and governments recognised the importance of incorporating more than just the economic into the management of tourism. The triple bottom

line suggests that economic imperatives must be balanced with environmental and social sustainability.

This balance can be demonstrated in both remote Aboriginal communities (Fennel and Dowling 2003) and with village tribal negotiations over ecotourist endeavours in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In PNG villages and tribes along the Kokoda trail have been subject to coercion, bribery and corruption by mining companies to allow traditional lands to be surveyed for minerals and mining. There are large resources for the companies at stake and there has been protest against and support from the communities in the economic benefits reaped by these companies. It is clear that such practices with little community consultation risk in the middle to long term over developing at rapid and poorly planned pace and destroying the environment of highland communities in PNG (Wearing, Wearing and MacDonald 2010).

These indigenous communities can follow the community-based paradigms for ecotourism developed in partnership with communities in case studies of the design and practice used in African countries and elsewhere. Salole (2007), for example, shows how venture tourism project such as the example of rural Namibia can be reasonably successful with the input of and profit sharing amongst small communities. This North West part of Namibia lets tourist experience the isolated beauty of the area and the natural environment but previously had few resources to develop an ecotourist site. The final product was a tourist lodge with particular features suited to the largely farming communities of the area. A partnership with an experienced photographic safari tour operator (that itself was developed by guides from a small bird tour to a larger safaris operation), government assistance in establishing new legislation and policy and four local tribal groups saw the venture establish a lodge for tourist. A contract was signed with the issue of local employment seen as of mutual advantage and included provisions such as local recruitment of all staff, 10% of net revenue paid to the community, financial transparency, and an option for the community to purchase the assets after ten years.

‘A Buck Each Way’ Eco or Nature Tourism - Australia and New Zealand

As if to hedge its bets both ways Australia and New Zealand represent countries in the OECD who seem to struggle for decommodification of ecotourism given these countries close ties with hard and softer neoliberalism from respective national governments. Maori and Australian Aboriginal communities are taking control of their tourist destination sites tied to sacred sites such as Uluru (Wittakar 1994, Hollingshead, 2007, Sharpley 2009). Colton and Harris (2007) also provide some excellent examples of community development with indigenous Communities in Canada and space does not permit us to detail the important processes in such development work (see also Timothy 2002). The basic assumptions behind community practice in this work is that it engages and provides an organised eco-activist agenda for eco-tourism to flourish in more decommodified or less ‘profit hungry’ ways. The outcome oriented towards both community participation and control of the social and economic benefits in local markets.

If we look at what is occurring around ecotourism and Aboriginal culture and identity most notably in the Northern Territory of Australia. There is often a complicated nexus between welfare and tourism at the peripheries of these societies as low incomes are bound up with semi traditional communities and lifestyle. It seems these places of tourist sites are also targets of “welfare reform” and their populations seen as welfare dependent with associated White racist or classist stereotypes. For example, regional Australian Aboriginal communities are commonly depicted in the media as being dependent on welfare benefits for their existence and are immersed in a series of other social issues including alcoholism (Hollingshead 2007). Less visible in the Australian media are positive images of Aboriginal communities as proprietors, custodians and owners of key tourist and heritage areas such as Kakadu National Park or Uluru. Yet, with these views and the engagement of these communities that have been traditionally “othered” we see that through initiatives such as joint management the growth of tourism in a more equitable manner where it provides a diversity of natural and cultural experiences that provide the tourist with a diverse and engaged experience and where the interest of the host communities is sustained.

Joint management has been successfully brokered where Aboriginal landowners and Parks Australia work together and decide what should be done to manage a national park with and on behalf of traditional owners and for other interests. Joint management is about working together to enhance and protect Aboriginal rights and interests while looking after the natural and cultural values of Kakadu National Park, and providing opportunities for visitors to experience and appreciate these values safely (Wearing & Huyskens 2001). The joint management of Kakadu is an example of integrated nature conservation and community development abet with some practice issues. In Australia joint management is achieved through the appointment of a management board that has a majority of indigenous people nominated by traditional owners if the reserve is wholly or mostly on indigenous people's land. The board of management makes policy and strategic management decisions about park management and tourism.

It is however important to note that processes that attempt to empower indigenous stakeholders may not achieve this. As Banerjee (2000) finds with the Jabiluka/Kakadu WHA where the communities had no final power of veto on the process. This has also been seen in the joint management regimes in place in Australia where it was recognised that they are essentially Western cultural models of management with an inherent Anglo-Australian cultural bias (Wearing and Huyskens 2001) and as De Lacy and Lawson (1997: 176) find some Anangu (indigenous people of Uluru) are highly critical of the ninety-nine year lease at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, as they see it as a "denial of their ability to determine for themselves appropriate land use options".

In affluent countries such as Australia and New Zealand cultural sites such as museums also offer ways of the White ethnocentric cultural gaze is disseminated. The cultural representations have had to be reappropriated and broken down into a decolonised, spiritual and secular authenticity (Said 1989). First Museums and now sacred and important places to Aboriginal and Maori communities that requires long term processes of change and integration (Wjttaker 1994, Laenul, 1996)

Therefore as ecotourism often involves interaction with the indigenous cultures visited it should encourage cross-cultural communication (Richardson 1993), with many reasoning that it has the potential to enhance understanding about environmental values and opens the possibility to support community economies (Wearing and Neil 2009). However one needs to be wary as ecotourism has the potential for destructive intrusion to indigenous people and their community life leading to an invasion of privacy (Buultjens and Fuller 2007). Ecotourism is seen as the meeting of two worlds yet Johnston (2005) believes that this can result in either exploitation or healing. Indeed ecotourism appears on the surface to possess numerous positive elements for indigenous cultures however it has been argued that it can in fact be more damaging than other approaches because it targets indigenous people's culture and ancestral land directly and, even with the intention of protecting them, could result in the selling of sacred lands, knowledge and ceremonial sites (Johnston 2005).

Johnston (2005) describes ecotourism as the force that erodes culture, lures people away from their traditional responsibilities and inflates prices. It has also been suggested that ecotourism is a 'highly oversold concept that profits off indigenous cultures behind a mask of good' (Johnson 2005 p. 15) and can be seen as a contributing factor to rights violations and used as a vehicle to penetrate vulnerable areas (Johnston 2005). Furthermore there is great unease around the control of tourism in sacred locations and that the indigenous community within Australia has little influence over land use and rights. De Lacy and Lawson (1997 cited in Wearing and Huyskens 2001) have noted that communities such as the Anangu (the traditional people of Uluru) possess ownership of the land however tourism is a segment that they are unable to control. It is becoming increasingly apparent to them that they are being forced to contribute in the commoditisation of their culture and that this sacrifice may not lead to a guarantee that visitors will learn to respect their culture. Furthermore there is increased unease and tension revolving around the ninety-nine year lease of the National Park in Uluru for this action is perceived by the indigenous community as a lack of confidence in their ability to determine appropriate land use options (De Lacy and Lawson 1997 cited in Wearing and Huyskens 2001).

Ecotourism was to some extent introduced as an alternative to the constant leaking of money from host communities into foreign ownerships (Richardson 1993); however it is apparent that it has the potential to generate similar problems for 'much is promised and little gained' (Wearing and Harris 1999 p. 2). Indigenous people have expressed their concern about the performance of the tourism industry, how it disregards their interests and rights and profiting from their knowledge and heritage (Wearing and Neil 2009). This is reflected in the cases where traditional cultures are used to promote destinations in ways that leads to trivialised and exploitative acts for those involved (Wearing and Neil 2009). Particularly, some of those who wish to embrace ecotourism have found themselves in a position where they have little control over decision making processes, receive inadequate responses from the government, bring in few positive financial, social and employment benefits and experience extensive impact on the community cohesion and structure (Wearing and Neil 2009). Furthermore there is a lack of appropriate information for local communities in order to grow in the industry and make important decisions (Johnston 2005).

This demonstrates that for those who desire to be involved in the industry undergo the risk of being swept up in the 'backwash of the industry's impacts with opportunities foreclosed' (Johnston 2006 p. 13). A common argument for encouraging Indigenous communities to be involved in ecotourism is that there will be increased employment opportunities. However this can be restricted and unrewarding for some especially in remote areas where locals can lack formal qualifications and resources which make it difficult to compete with outsiders (Wearing and Neil 2009). This therefore demonstrates that although ecotourism attempts to open opportunities for the indigenous community by creating an industry that will encourage tourists to respect their culture and their land there are numerous negative consequences that have the potential to affect indigenous people.

However there have been cases where ecotourism provides the opportunity for employment for Indigenous people in remote parts of Australia where there are minimal economic opportunities (Wearing and Neil 2009). In particular the Anangu tribe of the Northern Territory have developed a business based around

ecotourism that includes demonstrations of tracking skills, guided walks and food processing techniques. The most important part of this venture is that the board of managers is comprised of the Anangu, the traditional owners of the country (Howitt 2001 cited in Wearing and Neil 2009). This is a clear example of Indigenous people embracing ecotourism and encouraging others to understand parts of their traditional way of life without sacrificing their culture in the process. Another example can be found in the Pajinka Wilderness Lodge which was initially an upmarket destination that did not hire any Indigenous people. Eventually the local Indigenous community bought back the land and now run and operate the lodge (Richardson 1993). They now hire people from the Injinoo community creating increased employment within the area. These examples represent a form of joint management which has been described as a cross-cultural approach to the use and management of land within protected areas (Wearing and Huyskens 2001). In further detail it emphasises the point that it provides a significant opportunity for Indigenous people within Australia to remain on their land and have the ability to apply political and cultural power over decisions affecting their lives and the land (Craig 1993 cited in Wearing and Huyskens 2001). As aforementioned there is a significant difference to how Indigenous people and Western society view the idea of nature and conservation therefore this form of management attempts to combine the interests, values and concerns of both. Through the application of such models to present ecotourism practices within Australia and other parts of the world there is the possibility that ecotourism can promote traditional culture in such a way that does not lead to its destruction.

After discussing the varying affects ecotourism has on Indigenous cultures it is apparent that there needs to be an application of a consistent new model in order to prevent the negative impacts from ensuing. Considering ecotourism attempts to step in as an option to mass tourism it needs to be ensured that it does not become another commodified product where benefits are exported and natural resources are abused (Wearing and Harris 1999). A fundamental strategy could be the adoption of consultation, open lines of communication and widely distributed information. Communication and consultation should not be underestimated for they have the ability to bring people with common goals together and can empower others in remote areas. In addition if the same information is spread across all areas then that

gives people the opportunity to start on the same footing and grow in the areas that appeal to their culture and community the most. Lastly there needs to be available education and training for indigenous business owners (Wearing and Neil 2009). Education is crucial for the industry can only develop and improve the quality of life for individuals and cultures if it is acknowledged as possessing a significant role in the process. This could include providing knowledge on the industry, teaching business, technical and management skills and creating a system of locally owned and managed ecotourism developments (Wearing and Harris 1999). However in order for this to be effective it is important to avoid adopting Western education methods so as to avoid moving in the same pattern as before and ignoring that Indigenous people have their own methods of teaching that could be more appropriate say as modelled by Freire's conscientization approach (Freire 1970 1971, 1997, Giroux 1992, Wearing and Harris 1999).

'Even in the Poorest Societies' - Peru and Vietnam

Both Peru and Vietnam are two of the world's poorest countries and yet these very poor communities have managed to struggle against some of the tyranny of inequality and the influence of the globalised project of neoliberalism. Peru as a developing nation of the South has undergone some extreme exposure to the global market and neoliberal forces. As one of the poorest countries their local communities have not necessarily benefitted from the increased levels of tourism or focus alone on protecting the environment in ecotourism (Torres 2008).

Understanding the long history of struggle for rural Peruvian peasants is important in understanding the short term response to neoliberalism. Olsen (2008) seems to suggest that local rural communities in the South have not responded to rise of neoliberalism in Peru in the last twenty years directly but have encouraged economic and democratic participation in keeping with the needs of the system and market. In the 1970s and 1980s these same communities and their leaders had adopted strategies of local price setting, radical land reform and redistribution in line with support from the local Catholic Church.

Today it is unclear whether the protests and resistance to injustice and inequality in these communities can match the flexibility of neoliberalism and difficulties in

recognising the impact on poor people's lives of key neoliberal plank such as privatisation. Against this backdrop Peru has an abundance of natural wonders and destination that make it attractive for tourist wanting to experience the real South America. Peru also has a population that can be exposed to a more critical consciousness about the environment and their standards of living. The work of authors such as Paulo Freire (1970, 1997) and Henry Giroux (1992, 2012) on dialogic and cultural action could begin to build the political and economic awareness as a 'critical consciousness' in school education and in local communities. It is clear that in some areas of Peru are being highly commercialised by tourist consumption especially the well travelled nature and ecotour sites such as Machu Pichu and the National Parks associated with these sites. Commercialised interests in the forests and tourism have created an unstable and possibly unsustainable tourist market (Wearing, MacDonald and Wearing 2011).

Though the issues are different in Vietnam there is an ongoing movement that links national culture to eco-tour programs and operators. Vietnam has fallen somewhere between a development a state model and a competition one that emulates neoliberal thinking (Evans and Hai 2005). There has been a contradictory effort to reconcile market reforms with market socialism in this country which to a certain degree has opened up local economies for nature based and in certain cases alternative ecotourist ventures. Vietnam over the last thirty years has become one of the fastest growing economies starting from a low base averaging up 9% GDP between 1986- 1997. This has provided along with the natural beauty of Vietnam a good basis for the development of ecotourism and more broadly nature based tourism.

In recent years there have been several examples of ecotourism development especially in relation to national parks increasing from 3 to 30 since 1986. Nonetheless there has also been vast environmental damage notably during the US-Vietnam war with forested land decreased from 43.7 % to 26.1% between 1943 and 1994 increasing to round 36% by 2003 (Suntikul, Butler and Airey 2010). Much of what is called ecotourism in Vietnam is mass nature based tourism without the specific criteria of ecologically sustainable tourism. There is some

progress in terms of linking ecotourism to the development of national parks and bringing in powerful international and well as government stakeholders.

Social Justice and ‘Grass Root’ Struggles for Ecotourism

The political theorist Nancy Fraser (2010: 16-18) has recently argued for a three dimension view of social justice that underpins our views here on a considering the three part as whole of ‘local, just and sustainable’ eco-tourism. We will use her views to enhance our social justice understanding of culturally appropriate ecotourism. Fraser argues that ‘the general meaning of justice is parity of participation... (that) ..requires social arrangements for all to participate as peers in social life’. Within this general view are three dimensions. First, social justice requires the dimension of *distribution/redistribution* because the people’s parity of participation is commonly impeded by local, national and international economic structures especially by degree in developing countries. We have argued that in terms of eco-tourist entrepreneurship this involves given back considerable profits and resources including significant paid work to local indigenous and host communities. Second, social justice requires *recognition* of cultural identity that is determined by institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value. Suppression of cultural identity could also be a second hand and somewhat invisible effect in terms of non-recognition or misrecognition of unequal distribution. Importantly, neither the first or second dimension can work effectively without the other so that social justice strategies both the economic and cultural outcomes for communities. This is crucially important in ecotourist enterprise in that local indigenous and host communities require their cultural status and identity respected as well as their economic, social and human rights when implemented in the frames of tourist practice.

These two dimension will set together part of the decommodified frame for local communities to take control of such enterprises in cooperation with other sympathetic stakeholders. Finally, and Fraser indicates most importantly, the dimension of social justice is ‘*political*’ in that distribution and recognition are ‘contested and power-laden’. This is a specific political meaning of state intervention in that the state constitutes its scope of jurisdiction and decision rules ‘by which is structures contestation over distribution and recognition in society. In

terms of social justice and eco-tourism this means the values, form and content of state regulation and enterprise needs to be in cooperation and sympathy with those least powerful, most disadvantaged and worse off from particularly the economic development and benefits of eco-tourism. These powerless groups usually means the indigenous and host communities who are at the mercy of the marketization of ecotourism.

Both identity recognition and capital redistribution are central to new political and economic spaces for communities in the face of global capitalism (Erikson 2007, Fraser 2010). This is particularly the case for indigenous communities who require as part of their political goals territorial autonomy and cultural self-determination:

‘Indigenous struggles against globalized external dominance tend to differ from class-based struggles through their emphasis on local community, identity politics, land claims, and rights to a variety of traditional practices’ (Erikson 2007: 147)

How can ecotourism strengthen indigenous struggles? The concept of struggle is a key sociological insight for grass roots activism and social change because the outcome is never a zero sum. In modernity this has been more commonly related to the working class or more recently to host and indigenous communities who are looking to wrestle control and resources back from transnational companies complicit with Governments in over developing natural environment and ‘modernising’ such communities. Community based alternative ecotourism ventures can provide one important local strategy and a site of struggle for strengthening the identity politics of indigenous people to occur as a response to globalisation. We will use the ideals of decommodified strategies and community based eco-tourism as our measure for more just practice, greater identity recognition for and equalising agendas for local communities.

Conclusion

In short, we have sought an agenda for participatory justice and sustainable ecotourism based on Fraser’s (2010) three-dimensional theory from ecotour case studies in Sweden, Australia, Peru and Vietnam. These case studies of decommodifying ecotourism have illustrated some of the grounds for struggle and recognition that host and local communities need to challenge and set in place their

own agendas for alternative or what we call 'grass roots' ecotourist development. These grass roots struggle have required a recasting of cultural and political identities that mix with the encroachment of globalisation on locality, place and lived experiences. Largely because of their socio-economic vulnerabilities these communities can be tied economically to large powerful stakeholders such as mining companies or international tour agents. Governments, advocates and tour operators need to step in and work cooperatively (Sennet 2012) to break some of these economic ties. Local control of ecotourism is needed in order to work with these communities in grounded community based tourist strategies. Such strategies require 'voices from below' in the development process, agendas for change and the socio-economic outcomes for stakeholders based in a just and equitable distribution of resources and profits made in ecotourism.

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