

Chapter 2

Tourism Encounters: Inter- and Intra-Cultural Conflicts and the World's Largest Industry

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Tourism has emerged as a significant international economic activity. Estimates by the World Tourism Organization suggest that in 1996 some 592 million international trips were made, with forecasts that by the year 2020 the number will almost have trebled to some 1.6 billion international trips.¹ Though it is difficult to speak in terms of global figures due to definitional and classification problems, tourism and tourism-related businesses continue to increase in absolute number and relative importance in both developed and developing economies.

As with any economic endeavour, tourism is a force for social, cultural and environmental change. The development and patterns of consumption that accompany world tourism contribute to physical changes in the natural and created environment and also in the cultural meanings attached to spaces and places. The role of international tourism in terms of economic development is well understood, and this is reflected in the academic literature. In addition, a substantive literature has evolved looking at the environmental implications of tourism. However, until relatively recently tourism as a cultural phenomenon and the dynamics of its relationships with place and host communities have remained largely unexplored. While there is a need for empirical research and detailed case studies regarding the cultural implications of international tourism, there is also a need for theoretical frameworks which emphasize the links between the political economy of tourism, its social and environmental dimensions, and its place in cultures and cultural change. This chapter explores the growth of international tourism, its formidable role as a vector of cultural exchange, and the inter- and intra-cultural encounters it produces and directs.² The chapter also discusses the importance of the built environment

as the cultural space and place in such encounters.

Hannerz's description of the world as a network of social relationships between which there is a 'flow of meanings as well as of people and goods', indicates how the magnitude of world tourism, its apparent unbounded geographical reach and global inevitability, now provides significant opportunities for both positive and negative cultural encounter.³ Within the context of so-called 'world' tourism, cultures are traded as physical and cultural frontiers are penetrated. This process takes place visibly, sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly, and usually irreversibly. As Rojek and Urry have emphasized, 'all cultures get remade as a result of flows of peoples, objects and images across national borders, whether these involve colonialism, work-based migration, individual travel or mass tourism.'⁴ In reality, it is often difficult to disentangle the forces of tourism from those of other globalizing influences, but the premise here is that tourism has become an increasingly significant driver of cultural remaking and reinvention. Within these undeniably complex processes, the built environment often plays an intimate and symbolic role, providing the arena for various levels of interaction between tourists and the host community, and, more importantly, between the tourism industry and host community.

World Tourism: Myths and Realities

In recent decades tourism has emerged as such a highly structured and organized form of human activity that it is now referred to as an 'industry'. In reality, it is a collection of different industries, drawn mainly, but not exclusively, from the service sector. These are brought together both formally and informally to supply and service the needs of society to travel for leisure purposes in four broad areas: attractions, accommodation, transport and distribution.⁵ The fragmentation of the tourism industry, involving millions of individual businesses, together with governments, public and voluntary agencies as regulators, owners and shareholders, makes it difficult to speak of tourism as a single industrial sector.⁶ However, for the purposes of this chapter I shall adopt the term 'industry' essentially to differentiate the effects of tourism from those of tourists.

Despite dealing with the complexities of social motivations and the caprice of human emotions in juxtapositions of work and leisure contexts, the worldwide tourism industry, with minor exceptions, displays a common set of business characteristics: it is driven by the search for profit; it employs people; it is managed in the functional areas of marketing, finance, personnel, etc.; and it is subject to similar economic, political and environmental externalities.⁷ The industry is further distinguished by marked polarization between a relatively small number of dominant and powerful multi-national players, particularly in the airline and hotel sectors, and a vast number of small- to medium-sized businesses, often owner-managed.

In addition, tourism developments have increasingly been fed with capital from non-tourism corporations seeking to diversify. Thus, when speaking in terms of cultural conflicts in tourism, one must not only speak of confrontations between individuals, but also conflicts between systems and structures in the context of the processes and organization of capitalism, and differences existing between capitalist and precapitalist economies.⁸

Aside from the complex structural and functional characteristics of world tourism, three further features are outlined here. First, there are relatively few nations and cultures which are not effected in some way by tourism and the tourism development process. Organized activities such as 'alternative' tours to the Arctic and Antarctic and a myriad of other ecotourism and nature tourism ventures to remote corners of the globe exemplify not only a growing public awareness of the planet, but also seem to indicate increasingly sophisticated patterns of First World consumption.⁹ However, as Weaver has suggested, 'ecotourism' may indeed be no more than another form of mass tourism, involving, in the main, passive observers and consumers rather than saviours of environments and cultures.¹⁰ The key points are that the touch of tourism does not need to be 'heavy' or 'mass' to produce conflict in distant and often very fragile destinations, and that the growth of ecotourism markets is underpinned by significant capital. The so-called 'new tourist', seeking more exotic experiences and cultural encounters, is also armed with the financial ability to buy into whatever cultural experiences are available.¹¹

Second, where tourism has emerged as an important economic activity, it is frequently characterized by a rapid and often dramatic expansion in supply.¹² Growth in accommodation, transport networks, service infrastructure, and leisure space has transformed natural and built landscapes, moulding them to fit new economic imperatives, usually endorsed (implicitly, if not explicitly) by the state. In the city-state of Singapore, for example, much recent urban development has focused specifically on leisure zones and tourism themes.¹³ As one would expect, research has tended to focus upon the economic impacts of tourism development, but accompanying these physical transformations are socio-cultural consequences for host communities which can be equally as dramatic, though not immediate, visible, nor easily measurable.

A third feature of world tourism is that by and large it is a First World ideology, and, as such, it displays fundamental inequalities in the patterns and impacts it demonstrates. Though fraught with problems of measurement and interpretation, such inequalities are borne out by World Tourism Organization (WTO) statistics (figures 2.1, 2.2). Figure 2.1 illustrates the regional percentage share of world tourism arrivals over a 22-year period and how there has been growth in apparently 'exotic' destinations (though within the geographical groupings considerable variations do occur). Of particular note is the three-fold growth of arrivals

in East Asia/Pacific countries. In part this reflects vigorous price competition in the long-haul market, but it also indicates qualitative changes in the market, as tourists have widened their horizons and sought the exotic and the different.

Figure 2.2 shows the change in percentage distribution of tourism receipts over the same 22-year period. It reveals how some growth has occurred in receipts by 'developing countries', but how this amount is still less than half the level of receipts by the 'industrialized countries'. The

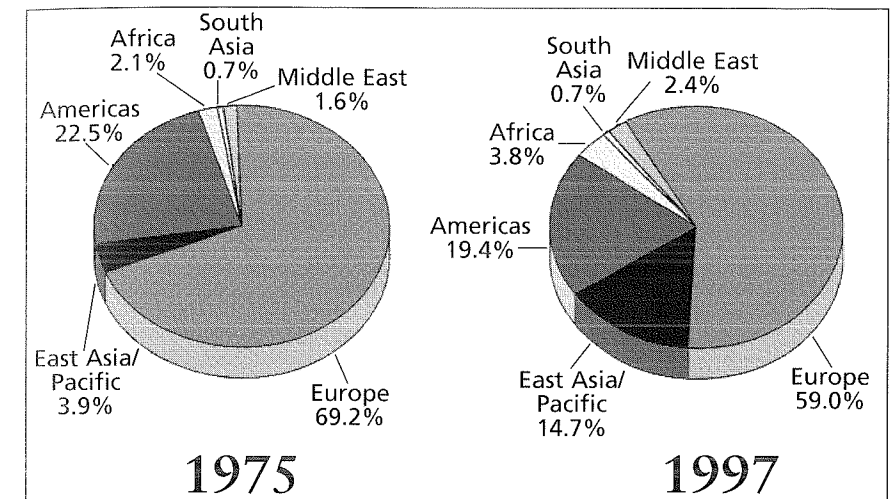


Figure 2.1 Per cent share of World Arrivals – 1975 and 1997. (Source: World Tourism Organization (WTO))

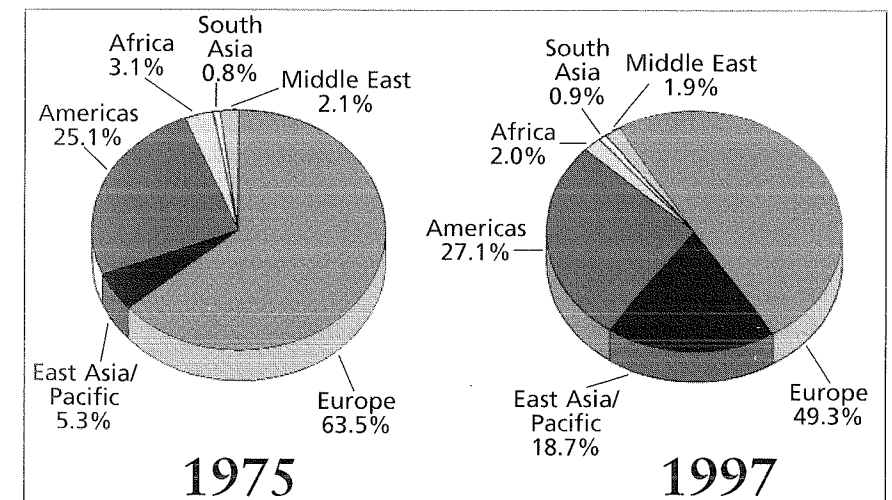


Figure 2.2 Per cent share of world receipts – 1975 and 1997. (Source: World Tourism Organization (WTO))

WTO classification of which nations are included or excluded as developing countries is not clear, but figures by Cazes have shown that the low-income nations of the world receive less than 2 per cent of global tourism revenue – a figure which drops to 0.6 per cent if China is excluded.¹⁴ Survival International has estimated that in Thailand, for instance, some 60 per cent of the \$40 billion generated through tourism leaves the country.¹⁵ Leaving aside statistics, the essential point is that basic imbalances exist between developed, developing, and lesser-developed nations not only in terms of the spatial distribution of tourist activity, but in terms of the economic benefits such activity generates.¹⁶ Moreover, by far the majority of the world's population do not engage in leisure tourism as participants, nor are they familiar with the social construct of tourism. The culture of tourism remains rooted in the First World as part of the wider consumptive ideologies that developed nations have adopted.¹⁷ The gulf which exists between tourists and non-tourists, the leisured and the working populations, the consumers and the consumed is arguably self-perpetuating.¹⁸ Tourists, by virtue of their ability to 'gaze', effectively reaffirm the cultural dominance of consumption and its capitalist framework. Indeed, one can cynically argue that inequalities – the very presence of poverty, underdevelopment, and the perceived threat of environmental degradation – can add to the tourist experience.

Such fundamental inequalities in world tourism form a backdrop to any discussion of cultural conflict and reveal themselves in the differing ways spaces and places are perceived, used and created.

Tourism and Cultural Conflicts

Cultural conflicts in tourism can be understood on a range of interdependent levels: between individual tourists and representatives of the host culture; between, and within, host cultures themselves; and between the tourism industry as part of the development process and host communities/cultures. Conflicts may manifest themselves in a variety of different forms, ranging from a rather intangible sense of disgruntlement and embarrassment on the part of the host to (in extreme cases) violence against tourists and the component elements of the industry as symbols of external influence and cultural change.

It is tempting to view conflict solely as arising from 'face-to-face' communicative encounters, between tourist and host as they cross over into each other's cultural contexts.¹⁹ Although such encounters can clearly produce benefits such as improved cultural understanding, the erosion of prejudice, and the generation of appreciation and tolerance, they can also result in a variety of negative socio-cultural impacts in line with Gessner and Schade's view that conflict is usually the focus of intercultural communication.²⁰ However, the interactions, which do take place between

individual tourists and hosts, are not straightforward. Nettekoven has noted that within the context of the majority of holiday experiences relatively few tourists actively seek intimate cultural encounters with the host community.²¹ Moreover, those encounters which do take place are usually short lived and *ad hoc*, occurring in the context of a limited vacation period and within the restricted space of established resorts. Interactions thus tend to be between tourists and hotel employees, restaurant staff, local shopkeepers, and local tour guides, as both parties respectively conform to established power relations as the consumers of leisure and the providers and servicers of the leisure experience.

Nettekoven has also made the important point that for developing nations, interaction with tourists is seldom the most important driver for cultural change, because contact and acculturation is relatively limited. Given that local tour guides, shopkeepers, and hotel staff will probably already partly share, or at least be in touch with, the value systems of tourists, the extent to which cultural patterns are changed is likely to be limited. However, negative effects of acculturation via the 'demonstration effect', including deviant behaviour to support the imitation of touristic lifestyles, does occur, reflecting the fact that although direct tourist-host encounters may be limited, indirect encounters are far greater and arguably more pervasive.²² It is difficult to pinpoint cultural conflict to individual tourist-host encounters in a specific cause-and-effect way. Despite possible 'culture shock' and opportunities for misunderstanding between tourist and host, conflict in the form of aggressive behaviour by either party is unlikely to manifest itself in any immediate sense.²³ What is important is the effect of these contact situations in toto over a prolonged period of time.

Tourists (and the industry which supports them) buy into a dynamic of cultural relations, although the degree of exposure and contact between tourists, tourism businesses, and host cultures, clearly varies. At times such internal cultural relations may provide a harmonious context for tourism; yet at others tourism can find itself entangled in a variety of ethnic and cultural clashes within host communities that exist independently of the tourism activity.²⁴ Such historically conceived clashes invariably politicize culture in order to articulate economic, social and environmental claims. Clearly, when violence erupts, touristic activity will be suspended, and there is unlikely to be much in the way of deliberate contact between tourist and host community. However, tourists and the tourism industry have also been used as targets in conflict situations.²⁵ And ironically, and often perversely, the physical remnants of such conflict have become absorbed into tourism. Thus, sites of previous cultural and political struggle have drawn their own tourist gaze.²⁶ For instance, the demilitarized zone of the 38th Parallel, which marks the boundary between North and South Korea, is now a tourist attraction (at least for those visiting South Korea). As was the case with the Berlin Wall, effectively there is nothing

much to see, but what tourists seem to feed from is the apprehension of conflict and the emotional responses brought out by the tangible recognition of difference. The conferring of 'heritage' status, commodification, and the marketing of such symbols involves an inherent selectivity, which promotes certain value systems over others and can result in the 'disinheritance' of non-participatory, marginalized groups.

Tourists do not miraculously materialize in a destination. Vacation type and destination choice are influenced by a complex range of 'pushing' factors, and they are also subject to a similarly complex range of 'pulls'. Despite receiving relatively less attention in the literature, pulling factors are significant. Indeed, though tourists may wish to believe otherwise, they are arguably sold holidays to a far greater extent than they buy them. This selling process is undertaken and controlled by the tourism industry and its various components acting individually and collectively. The industry is constantly developing and refining products to sell to the full spectrum of the market, whether this be the still-dominant mass market or emerging niche markets for activity-based tourism or ecotourism. This process locates tourism as an important player in the development process.

For developing economies whose natural resource base is depleted, tourism would appear to provide a rather rapid way of generating hard currency and creating employment. Indeed, utilizing the cultural and ethnic resources of a nation or region for tourism may be the only way to stimulate the economy. Although redolent of the economics of desperation, this course of action holds tremendous appeal. As Smith notes, tourism is seen as a way of achieving political recognition in a competitive world.²⁷ Compared to the development of manufacturing industry (via state investment, attracting inward investment, or both) it would appear to have multiple benefits: the establishment of tourism infrastructure can be undertaken reasonably quickly; it can serve the wider needs of the population (for example, airport and runway expansion); the environmental costs are perceived to be low; and the core products which lie behind tourism development – attractive natural environments and culture – are assumed to be infinite. For developed economies, too, seeking to restructure and readjust from a manufacturing to a service-sector base, tourism and leisure continues to play a leading role for similar reasons.

However, the development of tourism can generate inter-cultural conflicts broadly centred upon the competition for environmental resources, the commodification of culture, and the extent to which host cultures find themselves economically dependent upon tourism.

Resource Competition and Appropriation

An obvious source of inter- and intra-cultural conflict revolves around competition for physical resources (the natural and built environment) and

the ownership and rights of access to these. While at the micro-scale tourists often compete with a host community for access to resources (often unknowingly), the tourists themselves, as transients, have little influence on issues of ownership, planning and management. It is the tourism industry that has the capacity and the power to make major changes to the physical environment.

The tourism industry has long been recognized as a voracious consumer of basic environmental resources. Impacts have ranged from forest clearance or wetland drainage for airport runway extensions and golf courses, to transformations of existing urban and rural spaces into tourist attractions and hotel complexes. Of course, not all such transformations are negative; benefits can accrue for host communities from planning gain, new functions found for old buildings, and new facilities introduced for residents. Negative environmental impacts can also be minimized through anticipatory planning and effective management. This is essentially the *raison d'être* behind the concept of sustainable development – a merging of economic and environmental imperatives. However, to view the utilization of environmental resources by the tourism industry as solely a physical process is to miss the 'intimate interdependencies' which exist with local culture.²⁸ Various writers have commented on these cultural interdependencies in terms of the culturally constructed natural environment.²⁹ However, close relationships also exist between host cultures and the built environment too, relationships which the tourism industry can influence.

The international tourism industry, with residual imperialistic flair, is well aware of its power and influence to the extent it remains comfortable in making promises of paradise to the prospective tourist. As Greenwood has written, 'for the moneyed tourist, the tourism industry promises that the world is his/hers to use. All the "natural resources", including cultural traditions, have their price, and if you have money in your hand, it is your right to see whatever you wish.'³⁰

The appropriation of natural and cultural resources by the tourism industry in actual and symbolic terms can initiate conflicts between tourist and host, between different cultural groups within a destination, or between the governed and the governing, each not only with different claims to resources, but different interpretations of how they should be used. A good example of how the cultural dimensions of tourism resources can be misunderstood or ignored is the claims made upon Australian Aboriginal culture by the tourism industry.³¹ For example, Uluru, as one of the most visited natural attractions in Australia, is also a sacred Aboriginal site, and local Aboriginal communities have requested that tourists not climb the rock. They have attempted to explain this in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Information Sheet, which reads: 'That's a really important sacred thing that you are climbing . . . You shouldn't climb . . . maybe that makes you a bit sad. But any way, that's what we have to say . . .'³²

However, the Northern Territory Tourist Brochure offers a different view on the resource of 'Ayer's Rock', advising tourists that if they climb they need to 'take it easy. You're on holiday after all.' However, '... once you've negotiated the undulations up on the top . . . there's a wonderful sense of achievement.' The brochure also points out that 'Local Aborigines can't see the logic in climbing the Rock. But when you've come this far it seems the thing to do.'³³

Such conflict over the utilization of culturally imbued resources has both a moral and legal dimension; ultimately, it represents incommensurable worldviews and, more importantly, the pervasiveness and power of the tourism industry.³⁴ But the inability of the majority of the tourism industry to identify environmental and cultural resources as something more than merely manageable, tradable products conceived within First World capitalist paradigms is a problem. In terms of addressing environmental issues surrounding resource usage, the tourism industry, driven by self-interest, is increasingly cognizant that with market adjustments and some element of government intervention problems can be managed, and associated cultural conflicts ameliorated. But this reductionist, managerial approach fails to take into account the cultural dimension of the resources, which are at the base of the tourism industry. Even the promise of more sustainable forms of tourism emerging out of a sustainable development framework is an inadequate response. Apart from recognizing the 'value' of indigenous peoples, the discourse of sustainable development actually says very little on culture and the ways it can shape relationships with the environment, and ultimately tourism.³⁵

Commodification of Cultures as the Norm

The tourism industry largely conceives of culture(s) in two ways: either as value free, and thus largely an inconsequential aspect of development; or/and as just another product to be packaged. Tourism development in a First World context often progresses in a climate of acceptance or apathy. But this assumption can be, and is, carried into non-Westernized, developing societies with neither tradition nor need for outwardly directed cultural exhibitionism. Entire cultures can be 'showcased' for economic purposes by the tourism industry or for the tourism industry, and such arrangements may be legitimized by the state.³⁶ As Morris has pointed out:

Toured communities are increasingly required to live out their manufactured ethnicity for the gaze of the other, with the result that the destruction of some traditions and their replacement by others is required by the state, and then negotiated in various ways by those whose bodies and practices are thus required (but do not necessarily directly consent) to incarnate policy.³⁷

Moreover, a deep-seated imperialistic assumption persists that large areas of the world exist solely for the benefit of tourists. In line with Turner and Ash's idea of the 'pleasure periphery', King has noted how the 'paradise' of the Pacific islands has long been viewed as the backyard of Australians, just as the Caribbean has been regarded as a playground for North Americans.³⁸

At the heart of such assumptions is a commodification process whereby traditions, rituals, and 'ways of life' are packaged, imaged and transformed into saleable products for tourists.³⁹ Culture(s), as a living and learning form, together with the idea of culture and its shared meanings, become a superficial subjugate of consumerism and lose their social role, social and political function, and authenticity.⁴⁰ However, commodification, in itself, need not generate conflict if it carries the consent of the host culture and the latter can reap the benefits of acceptable commercialization.⁴¹ Indeed, while remaining contentious, the presentation of cultural artefacts and cultural history can be identity affirming, cathartic, and liberating for cultures seeking to explain their traditions and values.⁴² The key issue relates to the ability of local cultures to decide for themselves what aspects of culture should be displayed and how they should be presented.

However, conflict may be induced when the commodification process results in trivialization of ethnic groups and their cultural practices and traditions, or when it is controlled by agencies with little insight or understanding of the meanings and historicity of such practices. In non-Westernized developing societies with neither the tradition nor the need for outwardly directed cultural exhibitionism, there has been a long history of such commodification to serve the recreational desires and economic purposes of the developed world.⁴³ Tourists continue to be offered what MacCannell has termed 'reconstructed ethnicity'.⁴⁴ Religious rites, festivals, and ethnic traditions are often reduced and shaped to meet tourist expectations to the point where the host culture loses the deeper meanings and social function of such practices; or to where tensions develop within the community, as some seek preservation of cultural practices while others are happy to provide what the tourists want.⁴⁵

The precise role of the tourism industry in the commodification process is under-researched in terms of the exact points at which decisions are made, but it is clear that such decision-making begins well away from original cultural sites, emphasizing the trans-national and trans-cultural character of tourism, and indicating it is no longer necessary to travel to effect cultural change. Such commodification of distant and complex cultural features often begins with the highly selective and sanitized combinations of words and images within brochures. As Dann has noted, the brochure is recognized as an essential and highly visible aspect of the commodification process.⁴⁶ Through glossy photographs and creative prose, unique cultures are effectively reduced and reassembled to appeal to prospective tourists.⁴⁷

For tourists, the tourism industry's selective packaging of culture(s) creates a significant degree of expectation, which emanates from the industry's own value systems, which are carried to chosen holiday destinations.⁴⁸ The outcome is that tourists develop contrived expectations of the cultures they visit, which are frequently idealized and inauthentic.⁴⁹ Thus, when tourists make contact with the host culture directly, and externally conceived expectations of behaviour and spectacle are not met, dissatisfaction, resentment and conflict can arise between tourist and host, and between tourist and tour operator, in a somewhat exaggerated situation of breach of contract.

Against the backdrop of a First World/Third World development gap and a pervasive imperialist legacy, it is tempting to write off the commodification of cultures as some kind of tacit acceptance of established global power relations and the dominant social paradigm within which international tourism sits. At the same time it is too easy to ignore the involvement of host communities in the commodification of their own cultural traditions in legitimate attempts to secure economic advantages. The slow growth of involvement of indigenous peoples in the ownership and management of tourism businesses is welcome.⁵⁰ However, it, too, is not without some degree of selective packaging in order to meet tourist demands, often following dominant First World business models.

However, visited host communities are often far from the homogeneous cultural groups that tourists and the tourism industry takes them to be. Understandably, there are tensions and divisions relating to the extent to which cultural traditions and patterns of behaviour can or should be adjusted to meet important economic goals, resulting in what Greenwood has termed 'conflictual arenas'.⁵¹ Within these arenas intra-cultural struggle may emerge over competing claims regarding the ownership and presentation of cultural assets. Central to such struggles is the state, which may or may not reflect the variety of cultural groups and subcultures within a nation. Culture, in terms of ethnic traditions, language, religious beliefs, and community traditions, together with its symbolic expression in the form of 'cultural capital', are open to political manipulation by the state for both economic and nationalistic reasons. In a majority of cases the international tourism industry negotiates directly with governments and their appointed tourism agencies. Moreover, in much the same way as with other issues of international trade are mediated, 'negotiation' is conducted in the language of neoclassical economics and contemporary capitalism. In the words of Watson and Kopachevsky:

Tourism by its very nature, is shaped by a very complex pattern of symbolic valuation; and this takes place in a structured social context over which tourists themselves have no immediate control. The essence of modern capitalism is the remanufacture of images, many of which effectively obscure the injuries of class, race and sex.⁵²

Tourism Dependency

Various researchers have positioned the phenomenon of international tourism as a manifestation of neocolonialism and imperialism.⁵³ Similarly, in a neo-Marxist vein it is possible to conceive of the 'pleasure-periphery' idea of tourism as representing the fundamental structural dependency of the developing nations upon the developed nations.⁵⁴ The ideas of neocolonialism and global imbalance are borne out not only in terms of the direction of tourist flows from First to Third World, but also by the fact that the necessary enabling elements for world tourism – the means of production, the ideology of consumption, capital, credit, and information – are chiefly located in, and controlled by, the developed nations.

Dependency can also generate its own internal cultural conflicts, creating further negative impacts for the host community. In an examination of tourism development in Anuha in the Solomon Islands, for instance, Sofield identified varying levels of internal conflicts, though he pointed to external tourism development pressures from Australia as the main force initiating these.⁵⁵ Different levels of internal cultural conflict can occur between locals and those who work within the tourism industry (perceived as serving the needs of the outsiders first); between competing communities and ethnic groups; and between the masses and the local elite.⁵⁶ Given that tourism is a potent economic symbol and a driver for acculturation, particularly in developing countries, active involvement with the industry can create resentment within a passive host community. This would appear to be particularly the case when tourism development provides access to levels of employment and income which may be significantly higher than, for instance, that of local agricultural workers.⁵⁷ Compounding the emergence of gaps *vis à vis* access to (in many developing countries) relatively high wage levels, tourism employment opportunities may also be skewed toward certain social and ethnic groups, or labour may be imported from outside the community.⁵⁸

The inability of the host community to 'control' the tourism industry in political and economic terms may exacerbate the potential for resentment and conflict along cultural lines at both a micro- and macro-level. While it would be over-stretching the point to argue that cultural conflicts can be wholly compensated in economic terms, there is nevertheless a trade-off position by which aspects of cultural intrusion and degrees of acculturation can be tolerated in the name of economic development and modernization. Three points may be seen to emerge in this regard. First, the concept of compensation for loss of cultural capital, or the loss of control of that capital, is firmly anchored in the same, 'traditional', First World view which rationalizes the commodification of culture, and has legitimized its trading.⁵⁹ Second, the extent of dependency in developing economies does have bearing on the issue of compensation; thus, resentment at the lack of

adequacy in terms of 'reward' can manifest itself in cultural tensions. Third, it is worth noting there is nothing wrong *per se* in the utilization of tourism as an agent of development; it could well be the least disturbing of development options, and host communities may be in a position freely to choose tourism as one agent of modernization from among others.⁶⁰ Nor should one assume that culture in developing countries is as vulnerable and incapable of adaptation as it is sometimes made out to be.⁶¹

Cultural Conflicts and Tourism Space and Places

The range of conflicts identified above – between tourists, the tourism industry, and host cultures – takes place within, and interacts with, real space. As Urry has pointed out, 'environments, places and people are being regularly made and remade as tourist objects.'⁶² In spatial terms, the processes of construction and reconstruction reflect substantive economic and socio-cultural change. Gottman has noted the clear importance of the economy in shaping the function and form of the built environment.⁶³ Tourism and leisure, within the context of a dominant service sector economy, may establish themselves as important driving forces in the shaping and reshaping of both urban and rural spaces. However, the concept of space fails to convey the cultural relationships that have developed between host communities and the environment.

Emphasis upon space rather than place, or what Keith and Rogers have termed the 'spatial fetish', fails to acknowledge issues of belonging, 'placeness', and 'territoriality'.⁶⁴ Using A.P. Cohen's notion of cultural territories, the natural and built environment can be seen as imbued with cultural meanings and historical contexts and to reflect the values and behaviour of its creators, stewards and inhabitants.⁶⁵ Territory in this sense invokes feelings of collective and individual ownership on the part of the local community. In some cases ownership in the legal sense is an issue, but it relates much more to an emotional sense of connectedness with an area, a set of buildings, or streetscape as spatial expressions of cultures. As Cohen has indicated, the boundaries of cultural territories may not be recognizable from the outside, but are learned and recognized from within. Moreover, these boundaries continually shift in both aesthetic and functional terms.

From the perspective of the individual tourist, the act of temporarily leaving his or her own cultural territory to share with (or at least gaze upon) that of another is a large part of the experience. However, there still exists a 'mass' dimension to world tourism whereby tourists are largely defined by their sun-seeking hedonism within the confines of their own transported 'environmental bubble'.⁶⁶ While there is evidence that mass tourism is giving way to a more complex postmodern touristic experience, mass tours nevertheless remain the functional core and profit centre of the

international tourism market.⁶⁷ This arguably partly explains why there is little in the way of emphasis upon, and concern for, the cultural dimensions of place and territory for the majority of the tourism industry. Rather, the challenge is to find (or create) attractive, exciting (and largely value-neutral spaces) that the mass of tourists will want to buy into. As Ringer has noted, 'tourism is essentially about the creation and reconstruction of geographic landscapes as distinctive tourism destinations through manipulations of history and culture.'⁶⁸

For tourists and residents alike expectations are constructed and perceptions shaped as the tourism industry confirms its hegemony through the physical creation and re-creation of place. New leisure-oriented ideologies, derived in the main from the First World, can collide with traditional value systems of host cultures, entailing the view that 'the creation of tourist/recreation places to visit and things worth seeing has a guiding function in [a] community, telling us what is beautiful and worthwhile and what is nice.'⁶⁹

Conflicts and Created Spaces

At this juncture, and broadly following the distinctions between 'mass' and 'niche' tourism, it is important to differentiate between two fundamental types of tourism spaces and places: those which are purpose built to cater to tourist desires, and those which tourists converge upon and actively 'share' with the host community. The former type is perhaps the most straightforward to identify. The tourism industry has been successful in creating its own spaces, such as purpose-built resort complexes and theme parks. These frequently exist within physical boundaries through which the tourist has symbolically to pass in order to experience the leisure product within. The product itself is designed to be total and confined to the one complex.⁷⁰ Pearce has referred to such purpose-built centres as tourist 'places', though it is difficult to see them as possessing the same kind of intimate 'placeness' that residents may share with a location.⁷¹ Also, reflecting the postmodernist blurring of leisure boundaries, shopping malls may arguably be added to those spaces that are purposely created with tourists in mind. Large retail outlets, often designed around a series of themes, are clearly part of the landscape of consumption which tourists increasingly inhabit.⁷²

Characteristics of such created spaces include functionality and efficiency, self-reliance, and a certain degree of replicability. The question of what impacts these designed tourism spaces have upon the built environment is somewhat misplaced, since the built environment overall is likely to be newly designed and constructed so as to meet the requirements of the tourist first and foremost. Rather, issues can arise over the location and environmental positioning of such complexes *vis à vis* such issues as

access, visual compatibility with their setting, and the degree of ecological disturbance to which they may or may not contribute.⁷³

The 'out of town' location for resorts, shopping malls and theme parks may provide the distance element of the tourist experience – distance both in physical and psychological terms. Such locations allow enough separateness from day-to-day life so that the theme park may, for example, become an 'away' place.⁷⁴ But being separate from the ordinariness of the surrounding environment also allows tourist enclaves to develop, ostensibly removing tourists from contact with the host community.⁷⁵ It is the dominance and relative isolation of the tourist that is perhaps the most important characteristic of all the types of spaces created by the tourism industry, a self-containment that allows for the development of internal tourist 'communities'.⁷⁶ However, whether a theme park which has limited opening hours or a resort which is effectively open all the time, such created spaces seldom allow for meaningful interaction with the host culture. Relationships within created spaces are framed by a two-way process of expectation and tend to be limited to essential encounters between those who serve and those who have paid to be served. Krippendorf has criticized the notion of separate tourist communities as being economically disadvantageous to the host, culturally limiting for both host and holidaymaker, and effectively a sterile experience.⁷⁷ This said, although resort complexes, theme parks, and self-contained tourism spaces are highly visible elements of the international tourism industry, by virtue of their designed separateness, prospects for interpersonal 'tourist-tourist' and 'tourist-tourism' conflicts are reduced *de facto*.

Conflicts and Shared(?) Places

A more intangible and yet fundamental characteristic of contemporary tourism is the extent to which it converges on the spaces and places occupied by the host community. Tourists at various times occupy the places which 'belong' to others and which carry cultural meanings for the host community. Within the short time period of a leisure or business visit, tourists essentially remain as Simmel's strangers and outsiders, with little opportunity, nor motivation, to penetrate host cultures in any meaningful way.⁷⁸ However, though individual tourists may not stay in one place for very long, the experience for the host community is quite different, consisting of a constant stream of undifferentiated tourists united by their transitoriness, anonymity, and propensity to 'gaze'.

Clearly, the sheer number of tourists to a destination is important, and the host population can find itself overrun and out numbered. This may be particularly the case in rural areas where pressures on communal facilities such as transport, parking, shops, and basic natural resources such as water and air can generate antagonism between tourist and resident. However,

tensions can also arise between city 'inhabitants' and 'users', the latter group swelling a city's population and competing for access to its spaces and facilities.⁷⁹ Tourists are a key element of the 'user' group, overlapping with such others as shoppers, concert-goers, and sports fans. In world tourism cities such as Venice, for instance, the historic core's population of approximately 80,000 receives nearly 1.5 million tourists each year, together with additional large numbers of excursionists.⁸⁰ Such a swollen number of users can induce conflicts with inhabitants, as both groups compete for space and facilities. Moreover, at key points in the tourist season the environmental and social carrying capacity of Venice is likely to be exceeded.

But while the infringement of place by tourists can result in cultural stresses and strains, arguably more significant and lasting cultural impacts on host communities are generated by the tourism industry, as it transforms the built environment to meet and procure tourist demand. On the surface the injection of capital from tourism developers is widely recognized as producing such positive impacts as land reclamation and ecological restoration, preservation of historic buildings, conservation and promotion of vernacular architecture, and introduction of innovative and challenging architectural styles. In the United Kingdom and most large European cities numerous examples exist of old mills and warehouses being restored and providing housing, hotels, offices, shops and art centres. In this way the built environment is often rediscovered, often deliberately with tourism in mind, and remade to fit with new 'symbolic economies'.⁸¹ In other parts of the world, too, tourism has catalysed the revitalization of the built environment. In her studies of Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, for instance, Shackley has pointed out that tourism development has assisted markedly in the conservation of historic buildings and their subsequent conversion to tourist facilities, luxury restaurants, and accommodation.⁸²

Having said this, the tourism industry is also open to criticism for its growing legacy and export of 'international' styles of functional, postmodern blandness. Resort areas, waterfront developments, hotels, and attractions have all evolved with little or no concession to environmental setting, local traditions, and the nuances of local culture and ethnic difference. Heng and Chang, for example, have described the redevelopment of the quays along the waterfront of Singapore and pointed to a transformation 'from a historically rich area to one that has the usual restaurants and souvenir shops that can be found virtually everywhere'.⁸³ Such property-led schemes of physical transformation and regeneration are commonplace in both developed and developing countries, pre- and postindustrial centres, large cities and provincial towns. Yet schemes such as that along the Singapore waterfront, and numerous other examples in the developed and developing world, have been successful in obscuring past economic functions and previous social and community patterns of activity,

save perhaps occasional references to the past by way of 'interpretive' heritage centres.

While this process of conversion, gentrification, and effective prohibition from abandonment is usually cited as one of tourism's positive impacts, little attention has been given to the cultural aftermath of such physical transformations. Within a relatively short time the built environments of traditional and non-traditional tourist destinations can be altered in both aesthetic and functional terms to create 'new', or rather different, cultural territories. The issue is not that of change, *per se*, but one of the extent to which a host culture feels a sense of ownership, belonging and participation in the change – especially when investment, development and planning decisions, down to architectural details, are increasingly being shaped by market assessments of visitor potential as much as resident and community use. Furthermore, developing space (particularly urban and inner-city space) to make it more attractive to tourists, has not always been accompanied by attempts to maintain viable communities there. Increasing land prices and rents, decreasing security of tenure, heavy competition for business space, loss of indigenous control, and the dominance of aesthetics over function, have all contributed to changing the social patterns of the host community, and the migration of populations, together with social and economic problems 'out of town'.⁸⁴

Issues of Ownership and Identity

In both developing and developed economies the power of the tourism industry has manifested itself in often-dramatic changes of ownership. Yet the dynamics of ownership in world tourism has attracted relatively little attention in the literature for several reasons. Because of the fluidity of international capital, the low barriers to entry in the tourism business, and the momentum of tourism development, patterns of ownership are difficult to monitor. This is often compounded by the distance and opaqueness of decision-making among corporate players, and between developers and governments. In addition, because tourism is largely measured by its economic success rather than its cultural integrity, the issue of ownership has not commonly been recognized as a problem. However, if one frames ownership in the wider context of territorial belonging, sense of place, and participation in the decisions regarding how places look and function, there are many problems. Cultural territories are contested, and have been, and remain, appropriated from host communities.⁸⁵ Arguably in many cases, appropriation is difficult to distinguish from normative processes of economic restructuring and the physical transformations that accompany it. Nonetheless, the impacts upon host cultures remain. As well as the much-referred-to 'tourist gaze', there is also a 'community gaze' which communities experience when they encounter the new, often dramatic,

physical and emotional spaces designed for tourists.⁸⁶ In skewing the built environment to meet the expectations and preferences of the tourist, the cultural elements of placeness – continuation, evolution, stability and familiarity – are eroded.

In assessing the changes that have taken place on the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront area of Cape Town, Dodson and Killian, for instance, have pointed to its transformation from a functioning port to a place of tourist-oriented consumption.⁸⁷ In doing so, they have also highlighted the impact such development and change can have upon a local community, pointing in particular to criticisms of the development as existing in the main for tourists and affluent, White, middle-class residents. Nearby residents of Black townships have been effectively (if unintentionally) excluded from the relatively expensive facilities of the waterfront. And while visitors can now enjoy the cleanliness and safety of the transformed port area, the residents of other areas of Capetown continue to struggle with largely neglected issues of crime and prostitution.

This process of physical transformation to tourism and leisure landscapes, appropriation for tourists, and the tensions and conflicts this can stir among local cultures and subcultures can be accentuated when decisions are taken 'outside' the community – possibly within a wholly different cultural context. In such a process territories can be redefined in accordance with the aspirations, tastes, preferences and budgets of external tourism developers and government agencies, and 'spurious realities' can be created whereby attractions and events bear little in the way of familiarity for the local population.⁸⁸ The tourism development process can also highlight different conditions of access to power among local groups and reveal tensions within destination communities.⁸⁹ For example, the urban redevelopment and reimagining of Glasgow which led to its being labelled European City of Culture in 1990, revealed a series of tensions between the planners and promoters of the city and the realities of its working-class communities, which were effectively excluded from the high-cultural experiences subsequently offered to tourists.⁹⁰

Identity, as Wearing and Wearing have noted, emerges both from the core of the individual and from within the core of communal culture.⁹¹ Through various formal and informal means of cultural display, tourism development can contribute to the development and reinforcement of social cohesion and cultural identity. Thus, Friedman, in considering the Ainu peoples of Northern Japan, noted that 'tourism production and display have become a central process in the conscious reconstruction of Ainu identity.'⁹² Indeed, tourism development can be partly legitimized by its claims to maintain traditions and preserve cultures, particularly in societies where cultural identities reflect long, unbroken histories and powerful continuity.⁹³ However, the development of tourism and its propensity to change the nature of places may also challenge cultural identities. While it

is difficult to argue that tourism is not causally responsible for the loss of cultural identities under pressure for places and their endogenously constructed narratives of reality to become tourist destinations, emphasis has nonetheless shifted from identity to the generation of images.

Bourdieu's view that identity (self-identification) is increasingly shaped through consumptive behaviour and 'lifestyle' may be helpful in explaining the role of the tourist.⁹⁴ But the cultural identity of the host community is surely something greater than a collection of individuals seeking to differentiate themselves through distinctive consumption. It is bound up with an intimacy shared with the evolved natural and built environment and is defined in part by its fixedness. Contrast this with the culture of tourism, which advocates movement and a non-fixedness, and the driving force of an industry which has no interest in people staying in one place for very long. The tourism encounter between tourists as the new cosmopolitans, seeking to experience and consume the cultural identity of others, is emblematic of the basic inequality of world tourism referred to earlier – consumers requiring something to consume. Even among the consumed community, whether associated with the provision of tourism (either directly through working in a shop or hotel, or indirectly by just being there), there are conflicts. And seldom are all parts of a destination toured equally; some areas and elements of a host community may be consumed more than others, which itself can contribute to cultural fragmentation involving isolation, poverty, and, in an urban context, the creation of what Sachs-Jeantet has termed 'outlaw zones'.⁹⁵

Conclusion: Uneven Tourism Encounters in a Shrinking World

This chapter has provided in conceptual terms an overview of the inter- and intra-cultural issues and conflicts inherent within the growth of international tourism and the structures that drive and support it. What emerges is a picture in which the cultural implications of tourism cannot be considered remote from the physicality and cultural meaningfulness of place. Destinations, whether purposely designed for the tourist or, more commonly, shared by the tourist, are not value neutral stages for tourism encounters; they are dynamic, culturally conceived theatres of complex interaction. Furthermore, in addition to the potential conflicts at the face-to-face level between tourist and host, the tourism industry often dramatically alters the built environment, and thus the cultural landscape and cultural evolution of a host community. New cultural territories with a focus upon tourism and leisure, often conceived and financed outside the destination culture, create further potentials for conflict between local communities, tourists, and the tourism industry, and can expose power differentials within and between host community groups.

Recognizing that conflict is a necessary – if not sufficient – condition to its resolution, but in identifying specific reasons for inter- and intra-cultural conflicts, there is still a need to address the generic characteristics which tourism as the 'world's largest industry' exhibits. Outstanding are the interrelated issues of tourism's role in the processes of globalization, the dominance of First World capital, and the expansion of the culture and ideology of tourism as a leisure activity.

The concept of globalization, despite its amorphous definition and contestability, nonetheless provides a necessary backdrop to the inter- and intra-cultural relations within tourism. Conceptions of a 'shrinking' world, the New World Order, and the global ideal, are all dominated by progressive, Western, neomodern ideologies in which economic relationships are central.⁹⁶ But the 'world as a single place' is conceived largely from an elitist position whereby a unified world without boundaries merely makes for more readily penetrable markets.⁹⁷ Conquest, exploitation and imperialism have given way to subtler means of supporting the inevitability of capitalism, whereby globally penetrating technologies now allow the peaceful creation of pseudo-colonial dependencies at a distance. Nevertheless, the telling metaphor of the world marketplace still reflects a neoclassical capitalist belief system that has evolved little in over two hundred years.

In the increasing implementation of global quality standards for tourism businesses and corporate attempts to imitate and assimilate uniform patterns of architecture, social behaviour, language, dress and cuisine, steered by trans-national investment, tourism can be viewed as one of the perpetrators of globalization. Furthermore, as Böröcz has argued, the 'standardisation, normalisation and commercialisation of experience' means the tourism industry will largely seek to maintain the *status quo*.⁹⁸ The dramatic economic successes of tourism investment (mainly from the First World) and the increasing ability of the tourism industry to control tourist flows and patterns of development in a remote way has also highlighted how tourism has benefited from globalization. Moreover, it appears that within the shrinking-world perspective, complete with postmodernist compression of time and space, the tourism industry is active in supporting tourists in their search for identity. Quoting Lasch, Bauman has pointed out that identity 'refers both to persons and to things', and that 'both have lost their solidity in modern society, their definiteness and continuity'.⁹⁹ Travelling to gaze upon communities which have retained their cultural identity, or which are able to present representations of their identity, and travelling to discover one's own identity, indicate that tourism is, in part at least, a somewhat parasitic search for those things lost.

This gives tourism an ambiguous role in the globalization process. In supply terms, through airline routes and well-developed trans-national distribution and booking systems, tourism engages in a very real sense of

interconnectedness. It also continues to partake in the process of 'Coca-Colonisation', and encourages aesthetic and cultural homogeneity, manifest in both form and function of the built environment.¹⁰⁰ Though tourism is only one of a number of catalysts for such changes, it is a significant and symbolic one.¹⁰¹ At the same time, the market, even within the context of mass tourism, appears to be seeking diversity and cultural difference. The more homogenous the world becomes through the promotion of tourism as a trans-cultural product, the greater the desire to reinvent those values which delineate culture.¹⁰² In this way tourists are being presented with an increasing array of cultural differences to choose from – some authentic, some staged. Relatively few prospective tourists seek total immersion in a different culture, and few host societies wholly seek not to adapt to the needs of tourists. Instead, the tourist seeks safe glimpses of cultural difference, and can often be satisfied with simulacra. This may or may not be accompanied by a desire to understand the culture of the other. In part, tourist safety from overexposure to host cultures is ensured by the short and infrequent duration of contact between themselves and their hosts. Host communities, however, do not go home: they are home, and contact may be continuous.

The problem remains, however, that tourism encounters between and within cultures are shaped by fundamental inequalities. Though, globally, the tourism industry consists of a myriad of small and medium-sized businesses, it is dominated by a relatively small and powerful number of airlines, hotel groups, and leisure developers who are in a position of significant economic, political, and ultimately cultural influence. In market terms too, 80 per cent of international travellers are nationals of just twenty countries. And though there remains a weighting toward mass tourism, with regard to cultural impacts the long-haul, independent travel market is increasingly important.¹⁰³ Importantly, the majority of the world's population does not holiday; but this is not a straightforward First/Third World issue, nor a function of economic well-being. It also relates to a lack of tourism culture. The example of the surprising, and relatively small, proportion of the population of the United States who hold passports would seem to indicate that an absence of a cultural framework for tourism (as opposed to leisure) is not automatically linked to economic and social status. The 'learning' of the culture of tourism involves something more than just *how* to consume. It also involves accepting the desire to consume otherness and, implicitly, the need to select, commodify and package the world.

Given the inequities displayed, charges that tourism is merely a different form of colonialism (postcolonialism) and imperialism are difficult to refute. Although forecasts suggest that lesser-developed nations will increasingly become 'sender' countries, they will largely remain as Turner and Ash's 'pleasure periphery' – politically marginalized and economically

pocketed by the North and West.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, in a global sense, the pleasure periphery has expanded dramatically, taking in more than the 'Third World' and indigenous populations. Even *within* developed nations pleasure peripheries can be identified, as rural margins are increasingly dependent upon urban markets, city centres have developed as recreational centres for suburbanites, and business travellers with company accounts are served by low-waged peripheral labourers.

The rootedness of world tourism in historical relations, the legacy of imperialism, concentrated ownership of tourism's structures, the tendency to assume a dominant-subordinate relationship, together with still-growing expectations and opportunities among developed countries to engage in tourism, all point to a fundamental inequality, and to a process (however unconsciously articulated) of First World hegemony, reflected in distant, but local tourist-host encounters.¹⁰⁵ But this is not solely an economic process. While representations of tourism as a simplistic and value-neutral exchange in which cultural differences and otherness are traded for tangible economic gain and elusive social well-being still persist, the reality of tourism is much different. Tourism is also usually unequal in cultural terms, does not always take place on the basis of consent, and frequently escapes any notion of mutual cultural understanding.¹⁰⁶

In any conceptual discussion of world phenomena such as tourism the routes to generalization are open. However, the realities of tourism encounters, understanding the potential for cultural conflicts, the transformations of space and place, and the effects upon the built and natural environment are all framed by this rather uncomfortable feeling of imbalance, of a tourism industry which through its own culture is shaping the world, how it looks, how it functions, and what it means.

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