

THIRD WORLD

# RESURGENCE

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**Global  
tourism  
growth:  
Remedy  
or ruin?**

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## *Editor's Note*

ONE of the most striking developments in recent decades has been the phenomenal expansion of tourism worldwide. It is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world economy, currently accounting for some 10% of global GDP.

Few realise that there is even a United Nations agency, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), to promote the sector. UNWTO views tourism as a 'driver of economic growth' which can help developing countries to eradicate poverty, protect cultural and biological diversity, and promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

Already in the 1970s, however, this claim that tourism was a passport to development came under challenge. Studies of tourism in the West Indies revealed that ultimately, most of the receipts from tourist expenditure failed to remain in the host country to provide the necessary resources for development; instead, they flowed back to the metropolitan countries. Thus, according to one study in the 1970s, for every dollar spent in the Commonwealth Caribbean, 77 cents returned in some form to the metropolitan centres.

Some two decades later, a study of tourism 'leakage' in Thailand by the National Institute for Development and Administration (NIDA) estimated that 70% of all money spent by tourists ended up leaving Thailand.

The reasons for these 'leakages' are not difficult to explain. The infrastructure to support tourism, e.g., airports and attendant facilities, road construction, hotels and overseas tourist promotion facilities, quite often requires massive imports and expenditure abroad. The situation is made worse where the tourism sector is dominated by Western tourist agencies, airlines and hotel chains, particularly multinationals. Far from promoting development, critics have charged, tourism serves to entrench the unequal relationship between North and South which was the whole basis for underdevelopment.

Since the 1990s, the dramatic changes in the world economy which have taken place have served to make developing countries more vulnerable not only to such 'leakages' but also to all the other ills associated with tourism.

With the onset of globalisation and the adoption of neoliberalism (either voluntarily or as part of the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank or International Monetary Fund for loans), tourism has become refashioned and reoriented wholly in accordance with the tenets of this economic ideology.

The ideology's central tenets of privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation have facilitated the extraordinary expansion of tourism in developing countries and, with it, the import component to support it. The liberalisation of the financial sector and removal of constraints on foreign capital and ownership have provided unparalleled opportunities for the entry of multinational tourist agencies and hotel chains in this

burgeoning trade. While some countries have undeniably managed to reduce the foreign import component of their tourist trade, many others have failed to staunch the continuing 'leakages'.

However, apart from such loss of national revenue, it is the socioeconomic and cultural conflicts and environmental and human rights violations in host countries that have made tourism so questionable. The rush to tourism development has resulted in a scramble for land to construct the amenities and infrastructure to support it. This has led to soaring land prices and large-scale displacement of locals. In the name of 'sustainable tourism', indigenous peoples like the Maasai in Tanzania are being evicted from their traditional lands to make way for so-called 'nature refuges' operated by foreign companies.

Perhaps the best symbol of the mindless, destructive development engendered by tourism is the rise of the 'aerotropolis' or 'airport city' – a city built around a new or existing airport. With such infrastructures mushrooming across the globe, even farmlands and wildlife habitats will not be spared.

Where land is in short supply, as in islands such as Bali (Indonesia) and Penang (Malaysia), massive land reclamation projects have become the vogue. Such projects invariably have adverse ecological impacts. Thus the Benoa Bay reclamation project designed to link three important hubs of Bali has drawn fierce protests from villagers in adjoining areas who fear that it will cause the flooding of their homes.

As for the claim that tourism promotes gender equality, this must be set against the backdrop of the ruthless exploitation in the form of sex tourism and the all-pervasive commodification of women that is taking place in the industry. Above all, the truth is that the vast majority of ordinary women workers in the tourism industry are forced to live with discrimination, sexual harassment and exploitation, job insecurity and low wages.

Finally, as planetary well-being is threatened by climate change, it is important to remind ourselves that aviation is one of the major sources of carbon emissions. With new research suggesting that such emissions from global tourism could increase by 300% by the end of the century, global tourism growth may yet prove to be our ruin.

In our cover story, we feature articles which discuss many of the negative aspects of tourism highlighted above. However, in addition, we include an article on the anomalous case of Palestine. Here, because of the Israeli occupation of their country, for Palestinians, tourism has acquired a unique role: as a tool of both oppression and resistance!

*— The Editors*

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**The claim that tourism is a boon for developing nations has been belied by its adverse effects on sustainable development in destination countries, including on local communities and the environment. 5**

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# It's alive!: The amazing world of soil

2015 has been declared by the UN as the International Year of the Soil.

*Anna Lappé* explains why the soil is a matter of life and death.

'WE can't eat those carrots,' the kids cried out. 'They're covered in dirt!'

My friend had been regaling me with stories about teaching public school kids healthy eating and gardening and this particular comment struck a chord: Kids are so used to devouring carrots from plastic bags that they're shocked to see the vegetables with soil still clinging to their orange flesh.

What we dismiss as dirt is perhaps the most valued – and underappreciated – part of nature.

Just a thin band of soil stands between our species' survival and total extinction. We depend on soil for food security, biodiversity and climate stability. Globally soil organic matter contains three times more carbon – 1,500 billion tons, to be exact – as all trees, shrubs and grasses combined. Yet we're paving it over with urban sprawl. We're draining rich soils for oil-palm plantations in Indonesia and cutting down vital rainforests for feed-crop plantations in Brazil. We're devastating farmlands with a barrage of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Half of all the world's topsoil has been lost in the last 150 years alone, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

Propelled by these losses, the United Nations and partners around the world declared 2015 the International Year of the Soil.

'When I started out in organic farming 40 years ago, we talked about healthy soil being key to healthy people,' Andre Leu, president of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, told me. 'Back then, we were ridiculed. Today, it's become common sense that soil health and human health are interlocked.'

Though we appreciate soil more today, it doesn't mean soil is being

treated like the royalty it is. To date, there's no mention of soil in United Nations climate change conventions. In fact, the only international agreement that refers to soil is the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and it focuses only on dry areas. Advocates hope bringing attention to soil this year will change that.

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## Just a thin band of soil stands between our species' survival and total extinction.

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The good news is it's possible to protect soil – even rebuild it – far faster than once was thought. It starts with understanding that healthy soil is alive. A handful of topsoil can contain more microorganisms than the number of people on the planet. Try to wrap your head around these numbers: In one cubic metre of temperate climate topsoil you're likely to find more than 10 trillion bacteria; 100 billion fungi; 100 million algae; 1 million nematodes; 10,000 springtails, mites and millipedes; along with fly and beetle larvae; earthworms; spiders; and lice. This life is key: To kill it with a chemical onslaught or too much tillage is to undo soil health.

These microorganisms, especially mycorrhizal fungi, are what Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva calls the 'brains of the plants'. These fungal roots bring nutrients and water to plant cells and form a kind of communication network, which we're only just beginning to appreciate. One British study of broad bean plants found that mycorrhizal filaments can send an inter-plant signal when one

plant is attacked by aphids, triggering nearby plants to mount their own chemical defence, repelling aphids and attracting wasps, their natural predator.

Though mineral subsoils can take centuries to form, using techniques like permaculture and organic agriculture 'it's possible to make new soils consciously and rapidly,' says ecologist and filmmaker John D Liu, who has been documenting the incredible revitalisation of the Loess Plateau region in China for 20 years. The region was one of the most eroded places on Earth; revitalisation efforts begun in 1995 are already showing results. 'We can see a return of trees at the tops of the mountains and on the steep slopes, vast orchards on terraced hillsides and increased production of annual crops in the bottom land,' Liu says.

Ecological agricultural practices have the multiple benefits of not only increasing productivity, but also reducing erosion and fostering resilience to droughts and flooding. They increase soil carbon content by taking the greenhouse gas out of the skies and storing it in the ground. But despite the proven benefits of agroecology, chemical methods are being pushed around the globe. In some African countries more than half of the agricultural budgets are going to synthetic fertiliser subsidies.

Having just returned from Amsterdam where I participated in an international celebration of soils, I'm heartened by the movement underway to value this priceless resource. Maybe in the not-too-distant future, school kids across this country will have a real appreciation for soil – and not mind a little of it clinging to their vegetables. ♦

*Anna Lappé is a columnist with Earth Island Journal. This article first appeared in the Autumn 2015 issue of Earth Island Journal.*

# Antibiotic abuse is driving antibiotic resistance

Researchers at the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP) recently released new data documenting alarming rates of bacteria resistant to last-resort antibiotics.

Though wealthy countries still use far more antibiotics per capita, high rates in the low- and middle-income countries such as India, Kenya and Vietnam raise the spectre of life-threatening infections raging uncontrollably across the world. *Shobha Shukla* reports.

ANTIBIOTIC abuse is driving antibiotic resistance. So suggests new data released on 17 September by the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP) via its ResistanceMap, an interactive online tool that allows users to track the latest global trends in drug resistance in 39 countries, and antibiotic use in 69 countries. CDDEP also issued the first-ever report on *The State of the World's Antibiotics, 2015*, that looks at the current state of global antibiotic use and documents alarming rates of bacteria resistant to last-resort antibiotics that can lead to life-threatening infections across the world.

## Key findings

### Cause of antibiotic resistance:

The greater the volume of antibiotics used, the greater the chances that antibiotic-resistant populations of bacteria will prevail in the contest for survival of the fittest. Two trends are contributing to a global scale-up in antibiotic consumption: (i) rising incomes are increasing access to antibiotics, which is saving lives but also increasing use – both appropriate and inappropriate – which in turn is driving resistance; and (ii) increasing demand for animal protein and resulting intensification of food animal production is leading to greater use of antibiotics in agriculture, hence increasing resistance.

**Trends in antibiotic use:** Both human and animal antibiotic use is rising dramatically in low- and mid-



**Increased access to antibiotics is saving lives but also increasing use – both appropriate and inappropriate – which in turn is driving resistance.**

dle-income countries (LMICs), particularly China, India, Brazil and South Africa. This increase, driven by increased prosperity, includes a great deal of unnecessary and irrational use and poses a major threat to public health. In many countries, like India, antibiotics can easily be purchased over the counter without prescription.

**Human consumption:** Between 2000 and 2010, total global antibiotic consumption grew by more than 30% – from approximately 50 billion to 70 billion standard units (SU), based on data from 71 countries. Even though per capita consumption is still higher in high-income countries, the greatest increase in antibiotic use between 2000 and 2010 was in LMICs, where use continues to rise.

The countries consuming the most antibiotics overall in 2010 were India, 13 billion SU; China, 10 billion SU; and the United States, 7 billion SU. However, in per capita terms among these countries, the United States led in 2010 with 22 SU per person, compared with 11 SU in India and 7 SU in China.

In most countries, about 20% of

antibiotics are used in hospitals/healthcare facilities, and 80% are used in the community, either prescribed by healthcare providers or purchased directly by consumers without prescription. Perhaps half of community use is inappropriate, for minor ailments that will not benefit from treatment, but add to the burden of antibiotic resistance. Hospitals generate some of the most dangerous

and difficult-to-treat infections, a result of heavy use of antibiotics (especially in LMICs, where antibiotics may substitute for infection control).

In hospitals seven times more antibiotics are used when they are given post- rather than pre-surgery. This not only increases costs but also contributes to the potential for antibiotic resistance. Even when antibiotics are administered before surgery, the regimen or duration of the therapy may be suboptimal: from 19% to 86% of patients in hospitals in India received inappropriate antibiotic prophylaxis.

**Agricultural/livestock consumption:** As global demand for animal protein grows, antibiotics are increasingly used to raise food-producing animals in intensive production – mostly to promote growth, rather than treat disease. The result is an increasing prevalence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in livestock, poultry and aquaculture. Also many farmers are transitioning to intensive agriculture and often use antibiotics to optimise production. More antibiotics are used in poultry, swine and cattle to promote growth and prevent dis-



ease than are used by the entire human population. Globally, livestock consumed at least 63,200 tons of antibiotics in 2010, accounting for nearly 66% of the estimated 100,000 tons of antibiotics produced annually worldwide, which is projected to rise to 105,600 tons by 2030.

In 2010, China was estimated to consume the most antibiotics in livestock, followed by the United States, Brazil, Germany, India, Spain, Russia, Mexico, France and Canada.

Animal antibiotic use provides no health benefits to the animals but accelerates antibiotic resistance. Recent analyses suggest that growth promoters have a smaller effect on animal growth than assumed. The countries with the greatest expected increases in food demand and animal antibiotic use currently have the least efficient farming systems. Emphasis should be on improving productivity without antibiotic growth promoters.

### Trends in antibiotic resistance

The most recent worldwide estimates of global antibiotic resistance, published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2014, list *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus* as the three agents of greatest concern, associated with both hospital- and community-acquired infections.

In 2014 in India, 57% of the infections caused by *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, a dangerous superbug found in hospitals, were found to be resistant to the last-resort antibiotic class of drugs carbapenems, up from 29% in 2008. It was more than 60% resistant for four out of five drug classes tested. This is a dangerous trend as the *Klebsiella* bug is around 80% resistant to the drug class 3rd generation cephalosporins, 73% resistant to fluoroquinolones and 63% to aminoglycosides. For comparison, these drugs



**An industrial poultry farm. Antibiotics are increasingly used to raise food-producing animals in intensive production – mostly to promote growth rather than treat disease.**

are still effective against *Klebsiella* infections in 90% of cases in the US and over 95% of cases in Europe.

India also has the highest rates of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) resistance, with strains of *E. coli* being more than 80% resistant to three different drug classes, thus increasingly limiting treatment options. *E. coli* resistance is also high and rising for many drug types in other regions too. In Europe, North America, South and Southeast Asia and parts of Africa, resistance to aminopenicillins – a broad-spectrum antibiotic class – is around 50%.

Incidence of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), a highly dangerous type of resistant pathogen contracted mostly in hospitals, has declined in Europe, the US, Canada and South Africa during the past eight years. However, it is rising in sub-Saharan Africa, India, Latin America and Australia and was recorded at 47% in India in 2014 and 90% in Latin American hospitals in 2013.

### The way forward

The CDDEP report stresses that antibiotic stewardship – reducing the inappropriate and unnecessary use of antibiotics – is key to controlling antibiotic resistance. It lays out six strategies that should be incorporated in national antibiotic policies to halt its spread: (i) reduce antibiotic need through improved water, sanitation and immunisation; (ii) improve hospital infection control; (iii) dis-incen-

tivise antibiotic over-use/misuse and incentivise antibiotic stewardship; (iv) reduce and phase out subtherapeutic antibiotic use in agriculture; (v) educate health professionals, policy makers and the public on sustainable antibiotic use; and (vi) ensure political commitment to meet the threat of antibiotic resistance.

The report advises that limiting overuse

and misuse of antibiotics are the only sustainable solutions. ‘A rampant rise in antibiotic use poses a major threat to public health. We need to focus 80% of our global resources on stewardship and no more than 20% on drug development. No matter how many new drugs come out, if we continue to misuse them they might as well have never been discovered,’ said Ramanan Laxminarayan, Director of CDDEP and co-author of the report.

One major drawback to focusing on drug development as a solution is that new antibiotics are significantly more expensive than those currently available – and hence unaffordable for most people in low- and middle-income countries. ‘When it comes to antibiotic-resistant infections, the rich pay with their wallets and the poor pay with their lives,’ said Laxminarayan.

There is still hope to conserve antibiotic effectiveness for future generations. In May 2015, WHO’s World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, which calls on all countries to adopt national strategies within two years. The new CDDEP report could help countries take coordinated and research-backed action to alleviate the problem.

Instead of being the default treatment for mild ailments like coughs, colds and uncomplicated diarrhoea, antibiotics must be treated as precious life-saving medicines, to be used rationally under medical supervision when needed. – cc Citizen News Service (CNS) ◆

# Tourism – a driver of inequality and displacement

Promoted as a strategy for poverty reduction and sustainable development, tourism is in reality fuelling the gentrification of the developing world.

Anita Pleumarom

ON the occasion of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13-16 July), the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) called for higher support for tourism in international financing for development flows in order 'to maximise the sector's contribution to sustainable development across the globe'. UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said: 'For an increasing number of developing countries tourism means jobs, poverty eradication, community development, and the protection of natural and cultural heritage. Yet, in order to maximise tourism's contribution to the development objectives, it is critical to address the disparity between the sector's capacity to foster development and the low priority it has been given so far in terms of financial support in the development cooperation agenda.'<sup>1</sup>

What needs to be emphasised here is that contemporary tourism development is very much a political process and in sync with neoliberal development strategies that primarily benefit big business interests without properly addressing poverty and equity aspects. This approach is also favoured by global lending agencies and bilateral donors that fund development projects in return for reforms that allow unfettered market-oriented growth.

The idea of fighting poverty in the developing world by ploughing grants, loans and investments into luxury tourism schemes appears bizarre, but that is exactly what has become the order of the day.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC, the World Bank's private



**A tourist taking photographs in Ethiopia. The tourism industry has the potential to seriously harm traditional economies and overexploit natural and cultural resources.**

sector arm) has long attracted criticism for its notorious history of investing in five-star hotels in some of the world's poorest countries. In August 2014, the IFC revealed that across the world it had invested \$2 billion in over 270 hotel projects. According to the Bretton Woods Project, the IFC in 2014 approved investments in a Marriott hotel in Bolivia, in India's SAMHI Hotels Private Limited (whose hotel properties are operated by Hyatt, Marriott, Accor and Starwood), and in other high-end hotels in Burma, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia. This follows previous investments in high-class tourism infrastructure in Vietnam and Guinea and deluxe hotels in Haiti and Jamaica.<sup>2</sup> The IFC thus seems to prefer working with big corporations to fulfil its goal of making profit for the World Bank, rather than targeting its investments at helping the poor.

Similarly, the UK Department for International Development (DfID) through its investment arm CDC pri-

marily supports the private sector, despite growing criticism of projects without a focus on poverty reduction. CDC was recently found to have invested more than \$260 million of 'aid' money for battling poverty in 44 property and construction companies in Latin America, Africa and Asia. At least 20 of these can be classified as dubious projects as they benefit companies that build or manage hotels, gated communities and commercial centres. For instance, CDC helped to finance the Garden City luxury housing and shopping complex in Kenya and a luxury hotel in Lagos, Nigeria, which costs \$400 a night to stay in. Alex Scrivener of the UK-based action group Global Justice Now that monitors CDC commented: 'These projects are an insult to the millions of people who live in these places without decent housing.'<sup>3</sup>

EuropeAid, the European Union's foreign aid organisation, gave over \$1.1 million for the establishment of the luxurious L'Oasis de Noira tourist water park in Marrakech,

Morocco – a vast holiday complex comprising a lagoon complete with waves, a golf course, almost 1,000 apartments and villas, a spa, tennis courts, theatre, shops and restaurants. Locals wondered why so much EU ‘aid’ money was spent on a project that only benefits the rich whereas poverty remains a rampant problem in surrounding villages.

Another blatant case of misplaced ‘pro-poor’ funding was reported from Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating January 2010 earthquake. As part of the country’s reconstruction programme, the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund – set up by former US Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush to channel donations into projects that ‘help Haitian people reclaim their country and rebuild their lives’ – invested in May 2011 \$2 million in the Royal Oasis Hotel, owned by a Haitian-Canadian-American joint venture company (SCIOP SA) and managed by the Spanish chain Occidental Hotels & Resorts.<sup>4</sup> The 10-storey deluxe hotel was built in the heart of Port-au-Prince, where people were suffering from extreme hardship. While the Fund portrayed the creation of some 300 jobs in the hotel as key to helping poor earthquake victims, hundreds of thousands of displaced destitute Haitians persevered in makeshift shelters of cardboard, scrap metal and old bed-sheets, with many of them facing evictions and struggling to have water to drink and food on their table.

### No ‘passport to development’

Already in the 1970s, there were significant debates about the uneven and colonial-style relations ‘Third World’ tourism creates: the ‘rich’ tourists who demand and who are served, and the ‘poor’ locals who supply and serve. After more than a decade of the World Bank financing massive tourism projects in the developing world, the Bank and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) co-published a groundbreaking study by de Kadt which raised serious questions about tourism as a ‘passport to development’. The other researchers in the volume point-

ed out the high financial leakages in this industry dominated by transnational corporations and expressed concerns about tourism creating new forms of dependency for poor nations as tourism development was closely interlinked with international debt politics.<sup>5</sup>

Tourism researchers Turner and Ash labelled tourism a ‘dismal science’, arguing that ‘the economics of tourism are totally deceptive’ and the industry had the potential to seriously harm traditional economies and overexploit natural and cultural resources. They described how local peasant communities were disrupted and displaced by tourism schemes, living costs skyrocketed and property values soared beyond the reach of ordinary people. They also illustrated well the substantial opportunity costs of tourism: ‘The locals build the resorts and serve in them which, if fully controlled by foreigners, will contain few really worthwhile jobs. In the meantime, the fields return to weeds; the locals lose their ability to produce anything of direct practical use to themselves. While they’ve been building the resorts, they haven’t been building the schools, the irrigation systems or the textile factories which would educate, feed or clothe them ... For the sake of this industry, they can lose their land, their jobs and their way of life – for what?’<sup>6</sup>

Even within the World Bank, there was growing discontent over using development aid to fund luxury tourism projects in poor countries because they ‘inject the behaviour of a wasteful society into the midst of a society of want, but the profits go to the elites – those already wealthy, and those with political influence’.

Under increasing pressure from critics, the Bank management closed down its Tourism Project Department in 1978 and stopped financing tourism projects, reasoning that it was ‘not a good fit with development policies’. However, the IFC as well as regional development banks continued to fund tourism schemes as before.

New concepts of environmentally and socially friendly tourism that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s

in response to the burgeoning tourism critique movement were an opportunity for the World Bank to justify its re-entry into tourism-related activities. Since then, international financial and aid agencies have initiated and supported a plethora of programmes and projects under euphemisms such as ‘eco-’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘pro-poor’ tourism. In tandem with the UNWTO, they have played a crucial role in engineering consent among international, government, non-governmental and private sector organisations that tourism – if properly planned and managed – is a key driver of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

With a global army of tourism actors promoting the ideology of a ‘new’, benign tourism and offering assistance to develop tourism in the right way, it is not surprising that governments of poor nations have embraced tourism as a strategy to boost their economies. But without addressing the unjust economic structures and power relations that are the root causes of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, tourism remains basically ‘business-as-usual’, with large foreign companies implementing tourism projects without proper scrutiny and accountability and maximising profits that are repatriated to headquarters and shareholders in developed countries.

### Touristification and gentrification

While sustainability and pro-poor development have become defining themes in mainstream tourism discourses, tourism has actually become one of the major forces for gentrification. When the term ‘gentrification’ was first used in the 1960s, it referred specifically to the influx of upper-class residents into traditionally working-class neighbourhoods in European and North American cities, and the subsequent renovation and upgrading of buildings. But in recent years, it has increasingly been examined in the context of neoliberal globalisation and related economic restructuring not only of cities but suburban and rural



areas as well.<sup>7</sup>

A particular characteristic of gentrification is that it has become linked with global systems of finance, real estate and tourism. With most countries opening up to direct foreign investments, public land in cities and other attractive locations has been privatised on a massive scale for up-market housing and commercial developments including hotels, casinos, golf courses, theme parks, shopping malls and special economic zones. Often, the monopolisation of land ownership by a few, as well as the absence of effective regulatory frameworks, has spawned disastrous land speculation and led to unreasonable and oppressive land prices and rentals that are beyond the reach of the poor. Land grabs, displacement, inequality and social injustices have been identified as constitutive elements of gentrification, particularly in developing countries, and vulnerable groups like women, children and ethnic minorities are most affected.

In Hawaii, which has often been hailed as a model of tourism development, inequalities created by gentrification are clearly visible. While some local residents may enjoy the benefits that tourism-related gentrification brings, such as better public services, job creation and improved infrastructure, the majority of Native Hawaiians and long-time Hawaii residents can hardly cope with the rising costs of living. Hawaii is home to the highest percentage of millionaires in the nation, has the highest median housing costs for renters, and is one of the top three most expensive states in the United States. Meanwhile, almost 15% of Native Hawaiians live in poverty when compared to the national average of 9.8%.<sup>8</sup> Homelessness is at a crisis point in Hawaii, with the number of homeless persons rising 24% over the past year. While wealthy tourists are warmly welcomed with greetings of 'Aloha', social justice and respect for human rights appear to be alien concepts. In July 2013, Hawaii's state legislature approved a three-year pilot project to remove homeless people living in parks and on beaches as they could



**As part of the reconstruction programme in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, a fund set up by two former US presidents invested in the Royal Oasis (pic), a deluxe hotel in the heart of Port-au-Prince, where people were suffering from extreme hardship.**

be considered an eyesore by visitors that come to enjoy Hawaii's exotic environment and luxury tourist facilities.<sup>9</sup>

Tourists play a role not only as consumers of destinations, but also as actors in the real estate market and purchasers of vacation apartments, second homes and retirement homes. An increasing number of affluent people who originally came seasonally for short-stay vacations have become year-round 'residential tourists', often living in high-end gated communities that form a stark contrast to traditional settlements. There has been a dramatic increase in migration of North Americans and Europeans resulting in the gentrification of coastal destinations and historical city centres in the Mediterranean, Latin American and South-East Asian regions. This booming 'real estate tourism' has in many cases led to conflicts with pre-existing communities over the appropriation of land and resources and eventually to the outmigration of locals who are usually the losers in such struggles.

In an attempt to climb the hierarchy of competitive global cities and tourist attractions, the state has often instigated gentrification under the rhetoric of beautification, urban renewal and urban revitalisation, with governments acting as enablers to encourage private investors and developers to implement projects. In the

process, green urban spaces are overbuilt, slums demolished and traditional low-income residential and mixed-use districts replaced by luxury hotels, apartments and commercial complexes that cater to the consumeristic and wasteful lifestyle of the rich. Bangkok, for example, with its high-end consumer culture and tourists coming especially for the city's reputation as a shoppers' paradise, has seen 'super-gentrification' in recent years with the rapid proliferation of extravagant tourism complexes and shopping malls that boast expensive foreign brands. According to a recently published survey, just one of these oversized malls with its massive air-conditioning systems consumes nearly twice as much power annually as all of Thailand's Mae Hong Son province that is home to about 250,000 people!<sup>10</sup>

Supranational policy regimes such as UNESCO heritage policies have played a significant role in establishing fundamental bases for gentrification in historical centres that are of special cultural and architectural value. For instance, the renovation of World Heritage towns like Lijiang in China's Yunnan Province, Luang Prabang in Laos and George Town on the Malaysian island of Penang has been subjected to criticism as it has led to the museumisation and commodification of heritage. The renovated town centres have lost much of their dis-

tinct character, as old family households and businesses have gradually been forced out in the drive to convert properties into hotels and other businesses specifically catering to the needs and tastes of international tourists.

In Latin America, it has also been common for local administrations to give major concessions to investors that transform architectural heritage into high-end commercial businesses, while small shop owners and street vendors are expelled.<sup>11</sup> Now, in view of the restoration of bilateral ties between the US and Cuba, there are serious concerns about Havana's unspoilt cultural heritage and social fabric as it is questionable as to how the city will handle the expected onslaught of foreign investments and tourists. Opening up the private sector in Cuba has already increased inequality, and as Cuban Americans begin to buy properties in Havana and elsewhere on the island, socioeconomic divisions are likely to increase.<sup>12</sup>

Touristification and related gentrification has also begun in poverty-stricken Burma that has recently begun to liberalise its economy and now considers tourism as a priority industry. The government has drawn up a 'responsible tourism' policy with the help of foreign consultants and civil society groups and put in place a Tourism Master Plan supervised by the Asian Development Bank in order to ensure 'sustainable tourism' development. But the rush to establish so-called 'hotel zones' in many parts of the impoverished country, where large tracts of land are compulsorily acquired for multiple hotels and other tourist facilities, has become a cause for grave concern. As the reform of Burma's land policy and laws is still incomplete, land grabs and disputes with local communities are likely to happen more frequently. Reports have already surfaced about increasing human rights violations as the government confiscates land for 'hotel zones' from villagers despite documentation proving their land ownership and rights to use land. In some cases, landowners who are ex-



The 2016 Olympic Games to be held in Rio de Janeiro are seen as an opportunity to redevelop the city for the privileged few – rich locals and tourists – while pushing residents to the periphery. Picture shows residents of a favela next to the Olympic Park in Rio hanging banners protesting the demolition of homes.

propriated receive little or no compensation from the government.

It is worth noting that amid a general laissez-faire orientation in most public policies, local and national governments have shown unusual decisiveness in preparing the ground for state-led tourism gentrification. One reason is their eagerness to boost their countries' image as 'world-class' tourist destinations. As tourism is widely accepted as a modern and benign growth industry, it is often used as a justification for the implementation of expensive mega-projects in preparation for major events. Rio de Janeiro, the host city of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, illustrates this well. The city currently represents a highly contested scenario for the gentrification of favelas located in inner-city areas or in the vicinity of beaches and the coastline – both prime locations for real estate and tourism development. Undoubtedly, the tourism industry is a main beneficiary of the huge government infrastructure spending for the World Cup and the Olympics, but local people are up in arms as their rights to housing and public services are being violated and threatened.

The Rio city government in unison with private investors takes the sports events as an opportunity to redevelop the city for the privileged few – rich locals and tourists – while pushing residents to the inhospitable periphery and taking harsh repressive

measures against all who stand in the way. Carlos Carvalho, one of the city's biggest landowners and the developer of Rio's main Olympic site at Barra da Tijuca, bluntly stated that the 'new' Rio has to 'represent on the global scene as a city of the elite, of good taste', so poor residents have to go.<sup>13</sup> On a nearby plot, Carvalho is building a tourism complex which includes a 3,000-room five-star hotel and 100-metre-wide boulevards that, according to Carvalho, 'will be the envy of New York'. Meanwhile, citizens have been facing a protracted 'state of exception' as the so-called Olympic Act allows massive development projects to be fast-tracked through special decrees and provisional measures in disregard of existing laws and without public participation and scrutiny.

In metropolitan areas of poor countries, from Sao Paulo to Mumbai and Manila, the frequency of unexplained slum fires points to the likelihood that combustion is not spontaneous but is often linked to increased property values and redevelopment programmes. There are claims by human rights defenders that authorities and developers are behind the fires to clear the way for projects and force out slum dwellers who resist eviction.

How tourism-related gentrification manifests itself in this capitalist era unfettered by state regulation and unions is well described in the book *Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism: Evil*

*Paradises* (Mike Davis/Daniel Bertrand Monk, 2008).<sup>14</sup> It notes that the 'new luxury cities' are nothing less than a utopian frenzy that 'enflames desires' for infinite consumption, total social exclusion and architectural monumentality. Probably the most famous 'luxury palace' is Dubai, with gated communities where elite groups live in a privatised heaven amid the public squalor that lies just beyond their enclosures. With only 1.5 million people, Dubai has been one of the world's biggest construction sites in the last decade, with dozens of outlandish mega-projects, including the artificial archipelagoes of private islands known as 'The World' and 'The Palm', the earth's tallest building, an underwater luxury hotel, a domed ski resort and hyper-malls. But Dubai depends upon a vast international immigrant indentured working class. It is people largely from poor Asian countries who toil in the construction and tourism industries – and who are very poorly paid, badly housed, subject to racism and to sexual abuse, and living without rights.

Mega-infrastructure projects such as super-highways, airports and cruiseship ports play a significant role in tourism gentrification. A new urban form enabling explosive growth in aviation-dependent tourism and trade is the airport city or so-called aerotropolis, which comes as a giant development package including, besides an airport and other related infrastructure, luxury hotels, shopping and entertainment facilities, convention, trade and exhibition complexes, golf courses and sport stadiums, and industrial parks. Super-modern aerotropolis schemes are even planted in remote rural areas and indigenous peoples' territories. They are not settlements for people to live in but only cater to a small privileged minority of clientele – the hypermobile frequent-flyer elite.<sup>15</sup> Aerotropolis protagonists promise these developments will boost local economies, attract aviation- and tourism-related investments, and generate jobs and income for locals. The main beneficiaries, however, are transnational corporations like airlines, hotel chains, large-

scale retail businesses as well as construction and real estate companies.

Across the world, pristine natural areas that are often the territories of indigenous peoples are now for sale to the multi-billion-dollar 'ecotourism' and 'remote real estate' industries. Tourism-cum-conservation projects turn into tools to accelerate economic growth and public-private development threatening the rights of local people and exacerbating the loss of their ancestral lands and resources for livelihood. 'Gentrification of nature' has arrived with high-end multinational-owned resorts – or 'ecolodges' – built in the middle of rainforests, wildlife habitats or on ecologically fragile islands.

In Tanzania, protected areas have increased dramatically since colonial times and become destinations for VIP 'eco-' and hunting tourists, while small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolks become homeless in their homeland. Chambi Chachage reports about Vilima Vitatu village: 'So here we are with a village that has 19,800 hectares out of which 12,829.9 hectares are conserved within a Wildlife Management Area (WMA). A French investor, Un Afrique En Lodge (ULEA), is welcomed to build a tourist lodge/camp within this WMA as if s/he is not a threat to the wild. Yet, the pastoralists have to raze their shelters, abandon their little farms and let the animals in peace so that tourists can ... gaze at them.'<sup>16</sup>

In recent years, ultra-luxurious 'ecotourism' featuring private islands and super-yachts has experienced a major boom from Hawaii to Costa Rica and Belize to Greece. Private Island News posted in July 2015: 'What do Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt and Warren Buffett all have in common? They're all said to be buying islands in Greece...'<sup>17</sup> A Marine Protected Area status increases the value of a private island, as well as its privacy. In 2014, billionaire Larry Ellison purchased Lanai, the sixth largest Hawaiian island, for around \$500 million, one of the most expensive island purchases in history. Leonardo DiCaprio, who has been celebrated by many for his environmental activism, pur-

chased a private island off Belize in 2005 and enjoys super-yachts. He has also teamed up with the Four Seasons hotel group to 'create a five-star luxury resort based on sustainable design and environmental conservation'.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

The concept of gentrification is useful to explain major trends in contemporary tourism development and how it one-sidedly benefits the wealthy and privileged, while corroding urban, rural and indigenous peoples' communities. Yet, the public is led to believe that tourism has the potential to eradicate poverty because it adds value to places and generates huge amounts of money. What is omitted is that most of the profits actually 'trickle up and away' and not down to the poor, and what is not appreciated at all is what local people lose.

Impartial and realistic tourism cost-benefit analyses are practically non-existent, but what can be evidenced clearly is that tourism is partially responsible for two defining features of our times: worsening inequality and displacement. Economic inequality has become extreme, with about half of global wealth concentrated in the hands of the richest 1%, while the other half is being shared by the remaining 99%. The world's richest 20% earn about 50 times as much as the world's poorest 20%. The ongoing massive displacement of people within countries and across borders is another feature of the human drama unfolding with egregious human rights violations and suffering wreaking havoc on populations. The underlying causes of both inequality and displacement are conflicts over power, wealth and resource sharing.

In tourism development, the private sector and governments all too often collaborate to acquire land, water and other natural resources without the free, prior and informed consent of local residents and communities, resulting in impoverishment and disempowerment of people in the process. Tourism has definitely not changed for the better since the World



Bank decided in the 1970s to stop lending to tourism schemes when evidence was produced that the Bank's tourism model involved deleterious social, cultural and environmental impacts and added to the already apparent divide between developed and developing countries. In fact, the situation has worsened alarmingly over recent decades due to the explosive tourism growth and the radically deregulated business environment.

After years of steady pronouncements by tourism promoters that 'sustainable', 'pro-poor' and 'people-centred' tourism is well underway, the widespread evidence of tourism-induced hardship for local people exposes the underbelly of neoliberal globalisation usually hidden from the public eye. The notorious conglomerate of financial, real estate and tourism industries fuels corruption and speculative bubbles worldwide and reflects the greed, excess and self-delusion of so-called 'casino capitalism'. In the name of tourism development, unnecessary mega-projects are implemented and luxurious private paradises created for the wealthy and privileged few, while the vast majority of the population must carry the burden of debt repayment and austerity schemes.

People may not oppose tourism as such, but local resistance is mounting against misguided tourism-related development and gentrification schemes that fail to deliver on all fronts: the fight against inequality, eradication of poverty, environmental sustainability, protection of human rights and the promotion of social justice and democracy. Recent protests – from indigenous peoples defending their ancestral territories and global campaigns against land grabs to the Occupy and European anti-austerity movements to mass demonstrations in Turkey and Brazil – are clear signs that people in different places reject the current neoliberal development model of which tourism is an integral part, and are rising up for secure livelihoods, livable wages, education, public services and democratic freedoms.

With the United Nations' com-

mitment to a transformative and people-centred post-2015 development agenda, it is urgent not only to reject the UNWTO's request for higher support for tourism in international financing for development. In view of the many problems tourism causes, financial support for tourism programmes and projects should be eliminated altogether. What the World Bank could do in 1978 for the common good, can be done again.

As tourism is fraught with ideology, a comprehensive and sincere review and public debate on tourism development is needed at all levels. For the post-2015 development agenda to succeed, it is of utmost importance to restore public rights over the privileges of big business and wealthy consumers and tourists. Moreover, it is imperative to put in place regulatory frameworks that effectively protect local citizens and communities from harmful tourism development, as well as mechanisms that require travel and tourism businesses to provide redress for losses and to clean up the damage they created. Clear, transparent and accessible mechanisms of accountability are also needed to empower people to monitor and hold governments, financial institutions, development agencies and the private sector engaging in tourism accountable for their actions. ◆

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# Tourism and the biosphere crisis: Provisions for inter-generational care

The biosphere, i.e., the life support systems of our planet, is near tipping point and at risk of irreversible collapse as a result of human activities. Tourism, both as an industry and a lifestyle, is one major contributor to this crisis, which will impact not only the current generation but future generations. *Alison M Johnston* contends that in the face of the growing severity of tourism impacts on our biosphere, to assure inter-generational care, there must be special measures for children.

## Pondering the planet

CRUISING in an aircraft at 10,000 metres, we arrive at a serene view of the Earth. This is a place of tourist imaginaries: where we can suspend our routine thoughts and contemplate ideals. But if intercepted at the airport by climate change activists, the experience can be jarring. We might prescribe them a martini on some distant beach.

As travellers, we imbibe the industry narrative that tourism is good: a pinnacle of 'the good life'. It is restorative for us and seems harmless enough for the planet. However, it turns out that this storyline is incomplete. We don't have a picture of where tourism is actually taking us.

Getting the facts on tourism can feel abrupt, unsettling more than our holiday plans. Even among activists, the pace of fact-finding has become unnerving. Just two decades ago tourism still had some surface shine: a prospect of recalibrating commerce globally through community participation or other 'fair trade' schemes. Few researchers anticipated the extent of caution possibly warranted.

Yet the word from Nobel laureates and other leading scientists worldwide is that humanity faces a biosphere crisis: an ecological emergency with acute social dimensions. The 'World Scientists' Warning to Humanity' (1992)<sup>1</sup> and the 'State of the Planet Declaration' (2012)<sup>2</sup> bookend the scientific consensus. Our



'Tourism, a pronounced form of consumerism, has been deployed to the remotest frontiers of Earth...'

biosphere is endangered by the helix of economic globalisation, consumerism and population growth.

The biosphere – meaning, the life support systems of Earth – is near a tipping point and at risk of irreversible collapse, as a result of human activities.<sup>3</sup> Multiple, simultaneous environmental disasters are accelerating, approaching perilous thresholds faster than predicted, primarily due to corporate excess, shareholder interests and consumer binging.<sup>4</sup> Without immediate remedies, the global norm of the next decade will include climate instability, dead zones in the ocean, burning forests and mass extinctions. For humanity this portends spikes in water shortages, food insecurity, conflict and refugee migrations.

This situation will directly im-

pinge on tourism, as both an industry and a lifestyle. Given this, we need to ask how tourism alleviates or contributes to the biosphere crisis.

## Investment impacts: the debate continues

Policies prioritising unrestricted economic growth continue to shape global governance, despite the Brundtland Report (1987)<sup>5</sup> pivoting our attention to the overriding needs of future generations. Lawrence Summers, former chief economist of the World Bank, maintains that raising the growth rate 'is by far the most important thing we can do for future generations'.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, global trade is considered sluggish.<sup>7</sup> Presently, growth in

gross domestic product (GDP) during 2015 is pegged at 1.1% for Canada, 2.8% for Saudi Arabia, 3.7% for the United States – all petroleum powerhouses – and nearly 7% for China, which converts imported fossil fuels into consumer ‘goods’ for re-export. However, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) laments that the world economy will grow by just 3.8% in 2016 (or, some sources report, 3.0%), saying: ‘It’s not something we should be satisfied with.’<sup>8</sup> The International Labour Organisation reports not only steep unemployment but also dire poverty among many workers globally.<sup>9</sup>

Against this backdrop, the degrowth strategy urged by the Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (Thailand) is lacking support. Although the Nobel-feted economist Joseph Stiglitz ‘argues that GDP is a poor measure of how well an economy is truly performing’<sup>10</sup> – because of rising inequality – the raw ideology of economic growth persists. In 2014 the Group of Twenty (G20) countries, which control 85% of the global economy, voted for an additional 2% economic growth by 2020, essentially an extra \$2 trillion.<sup>11</sup>

Since the Ministerial Roundtable on Tourism of 1998, during United Nations talks in Slovakia on safeguarding biodiversity (put simply, the integrity of our biosphere), tourism has been singled out as a driver of growth. In December 2014 the UN General Assembly voted to promote tourism, via Resolution 69/233. The rationale of poverty eradication and environmental protection is used, as if GDP delivers equitable benefits and costs within and between generations. The unproven logic is that tourism befits a ‘green economy’.<sup>12</sup> This presupposes that mass tourism can be sustainable, although ecological and cultural impacts suggest otherwise.

With tourism endorsed as a rescue industry, it has assumed a prominent role in national strategies for economic growth. In 2014 international tourism generated a record \$1.245 trillion. It therefore nests well with the ‘shop our way out of problems’ men-

talities (that is, the consumption-based economic model) stewarded by the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation and affiliated agencies. Tourism, a pronounced form of consumerism, has been deployed to the remotest frontiers of Earth, as a means of marshalling profit from the perimeter, as core commodities sag.

Tourism – a global complex of businesses – stands out for its innumerable manifestations, some quantifiable but others understood only through relationships at a village level (for instance, how people experience self-determination or oppression in their everyday lives). It has a vast infrastructure across multiple sectors spanning the petrochemical, mining, forestry, fisheries and agricultural industries. Because of this reach, tourism is considered a primary engine of economic growth. Yet this reach of tourism also potentially means unparalleled costs once the complex biosphere accounting is done.

Beyond GDP, there is a mammoth composite story to understand about tourism.<sup>13</sup> In most accounts, the needs of those most affected by indiscriminate tourism growth – especially children and future generations bearing the incalculable costs such as climate change – are muted or absent.

### **Lifestyle: purchasing peace of mind?**

Tourism is rooted in a long lineage of men who served as ‘collectors’ for colonial powers and institutions, securing territory and resources in distant lands: the explorers, traders, botanists and researchers whose memoirs suggest that acquisition is progress. It also sprang from the parlour stories of boundary-pushing women, among them Freya Stark and Gertrude Bell who slipped across cultural landscapes mapping terrain for early oil speculators. The tourism phenomenon always has involved privatising spaces (be it physical space such as territory or social space such as knowledge), including very personal spaces such as culture and now genomes. Only recently was the tourist mindset broadly questioned<sup>14</sup> or the

ethics of these evolving consumer extremes challenged.

Today, tourism still has a flavour of opening other places and subduing ‘othered’ peoples – of economic integration.<sup>15</sup> The tourism industry functions as a teaser, a concierge for other industries to follow. For the demographic North – the affluent, investing segment of our global society that holds bank accounts, stock portfolios, pensions and life insurance (sometimes dubbed the ‘rich’<sup>16</sup>) – tourism offers not just a holiday but also an investment and shopping outpost, providing the infrastructure for scouting, brokering and leveraging deals. This is a central contradiction of tourism: it heals us from the daily pressures of sustaining the materialist lifestyle, while priming our shopping impulse.

Recently, tourism has been amplified by celebrity ‘culture’. After years of Texaco, Esso, DuMaurier and other ‘everyday’ companies such as Nike funding elite sport circuits such as show jumping, polo, tennis and golf, there has been a luxury makeover of sponsorship, fronted by companies such as Longines and Rolex, and paparazzi-charged. Through social media we know that ‘Will and Kate’ became engaged in Kenya; ‘Kim and Kanye’ married in Paris; and ‘Demi’ not only swam with sharks in Bora Bora but also celebrated her 21st birthday in Kenya. Countless imitators now pad their personal brand by posting selfies from across the planet. As thresholds of awe diminish, ordinary tourists graze further afield in ‘poor but posh’ destinations. Fast-fashion is entwined with place, with *Teen Vogue* magazine purring about vacation wardrobes and ‘Sweet Escape’.<sup>17</sup>

As consumer aspirations balloon, travel has become part of the curated childhood emerging in the demographic North. Children from China and South Korea are shuttled off for schooling in New York or Vancouver – often as commuters, becoming tourists in both the destination country and their country of origin. Meanwhile, youth from North America, Europe, Australia and the gated prep schools of Mexico City, Cape Town and Dubai



regularly go ‘on tour’ as a rite of passage, either on school exchange trips or through their extracurricular pursuits – rowing regattas, rugby tournaments, choir festivals and volunteering being top of the menu. The ‘gap year’, once expected by a few, has swelled into a ‘gap existence’ for many. Some families build a travel calendar around school breaks, taking three long-haul vacations annually; children as young as eight can recount multiple foreign trips.

These social trends are buoyed by marketing directed at youth, grooming them as travellers. The tourism industry now spins catchy travel identities for young children, among them Mini Club Med, Ritz Kids and the Westin Kids Club. Older children are funnelled brochures from Oxbridge Academic Programs, Blyth International and other private academies doubling as tour organisers, via high school counsellors. In Canada, conversation about privilege versus responsibility lasts as long as Snapchat, among much of the ‘We Day’ crowd. Meanwhile, over 60% of Chinese tourists are under the age of 35.<sup>18</sup>

From a policy standpoint, it would seem that tourism is a dream stimulus for the global economy – a democratic, free-market, profitable version of the UN’s Goodwill Ambassadors, promoting social responsibility among youth and ‘doing good’ in impoverished locales worldwide. But do the promises and realities really align? What do we know about tourism legacies in the imagined worlds of ‘others’? Is travel philanthropy possible? Does ‘eco’-tourism exist?

In the late 1980s, when sustainable development was conceptualised, there was optimism that the tourism industry could generate meaningful alternatives for economic development,<sup>19</sup> benefiting rather than exploiting locals and their environments. Within a decade, however, many remote communities experiencing rapid, unregulated tourism growth reported devastating human rights challenges, and sought allies to stop the allegedly ‘pro-poor’ tourism and ‘tourism-for-conservation’ hybrids being promoted by governments worldwide to

pad industry growth. This led to a long period of supportive advocacy by civil society groups (NGOs) to inform tourism debates,<sup>20</sup> with the campaign against the UN International Year of Ecotourism (2002) being a rallying point. Grassroots groups chastised conglomerates such as Conservation International, WWF International and The Nature Conservancy for peddling top-down, market-based partnerships incongruent with the principles of sustainability.

The gist of NGOs’ message has been that there should be a precautionary approach. In 2014 the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum (TAAF) formed, asserting ‘we wish to inspire a growing community of care’.<sup>21</sup> TAAF has called for an impartial evaluation of tourism by the UN, warning that the tourism industry has an aggregate impact without parallel.<sup>22</sup> Its research merits our unflinching evaluation, given the biosphere stakes. Tourism may not be a sacrosanct industry after all.

### Aviation: a climate of contradictions

Although a recent crop of books attests to many breakthroughs in transforming our global economy,<sup>23</sup> tourism raises some particularly vexing questions about conventional economic thinking. One doozy is the idea that tourism growth can remedy both poverty and environmental degradation. So, let’s look at this notion in the context of airplanes, the global tourism emblem.

The aviation sector is a celebrated tale of growth. Although Canada’s Bombardier Inc. faces sagging sales of passenger planes, and a shortfall of \$2 billion, overall industry sales have been robust. At the International Paris Airshow in June 2015, investors were fretting over ‘how quickly a record backlog of jet orders can be built’.<sup>24</sup> In early 2015 Airbus Co. and Boeing Group NV had posted 247 and 175 aircraft orders respectively. Airbus concluded the show with \$57 billion in further sales (with \$16.3 billion of firm orders for 124 planes); meanwhile, Boeing inked another

\$50.2 billion in sales (with \$20.2 billion of firm orders for 154 planes). By August 2015 Airbus had secured an additional order from India’s IndiGo, of 250 Airbus A320neo jets for an estimated \$26 billion, the largest ever order for Airbus. Embraer SA (Brazil), Sukhoi Superjet (Russia), Comac (China) and Mitsubishi (Japan) are clocking vigorous sales as well. With crude oil prices plunging by over half in the last year, airlines have posted profits and hatched long-term plans for market expansion.

The recovery of Air Canada is being touted as particularly encouraging. This carrier has increased its international capacity by 50% since the global recession of 2009. It projects that 62% of its business will come from international routes by 2018, up from 54% in 2011. The airline just announced a new non-stop route to Australia, and is adding more flights to Asia, Europe, South America and the Middle East. Based on its recent profit postings and general industry trends – including record profits for Delta Air Lines Inc. and Virgin America in the US – the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (representing Canadian citizens) increased its investment in US airlines to more than \$3.5 billion in 2015, from less than \$2 billion during 2014. ‘Whether they know it or not ... Canadians are buying in to the airline stocks’,<sup>25</sup> in the same moment that divestment from fossil fuels investments gains momentum (led by Oxford University, World Council of Churches and Rockefeller Brothers Fund). Airports are also considered an ‘outstanding investment’.<sup>26</sup>

Global forecasts for tourism expansion are soaring, with little discussion of limits, particularly of biosphere-related costs. In March 2015, just prior to China’s currency devaluation, the Bank of America Merrill Lynch predicted that by 2019 there will be 174 million Chinese tourists, spending \$264 billion internationally – up from 109 million in 2014 and a ‘mere’ 10 million in 2000. India’s aviation market will keep pace, with passenger trips tripling to 450 million by 2020. Canada and New Zealand,

with ‘approved destination status’ from China, will profit handsomely in their GDP, the latter charting 12% more arrivals from China yearly between 2015 and 2021. If some investors are profiting, does this mean that tourism is ‘good’ for us collectively?

The award-winning Canadian author Naomi Klein has penned a book about climate change that would shock most tourists. Called *This Changes Everything*, it presents a cogent argument for examining the ideological sludge of tourism. According to Klein, airline travel is indeed a hot business; it is ‘the most carbon intensive form of transportation’.<sup>27</sup> That said, tourism also generates an untallied share of global emissions from infrastructure investments such as road asphalt which service tourists once the airlines deliver them on-site; from the petrochemicals used to groom tourists and tourist playgrounds (among them, fertilisers, pesticides, detergents and toiletries); from taxis, outboard motors, propane grills and other fixtures of the tourist playbook; from heating and air-conditioning accommodations; as well as from ‘food miles’ (some obvious examples being the food imports to Maldives, Fiji and Easter Island, but also satisfying ‘foodies’ at hotels and resorts worldwide). The tourism industry is a primary cause of dirty oil sands investments, plus a proliferation of not-so-clean liquefied natural gas (LNG) ventures.<sup>28</sup>

Long-term investments by airlines go hand-in-hand with long-term investments in fossil fuel companies. This warrants a turnabout in both multilateral and national-level policy and planning. Scientists have determined that 2 degrees Celsius is the outer yet risky limit of global warming. This limit was acknowledged by world governments at the UN climate summit of 2009 during debates on implementation of the long-neglected UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a legally binding agreement among countries. Yet our planet is headed for warming of 4-6 degrees Celsius if we adhere to the economic growth model of governance during this decade.<sup>29</sup>

Even purist calculations of GDP hint at the magnitude of social costs should minimalist implementation of the UNFCCC continue. *The Lancet* medical journal calls climate change ‘the biggest global health threat of the 21st century’.<sup>30</sup> A recent court case in the Netherlands foreshadows a surge of climate-change litigation if governments and their industry partners neglect the ‘duty of care’ to protect citizens from harm.<sup>31</sup>

### **Tourism fossil fuels: shifting the winds of globalisation**

To comprehend the biosphere risks of tourism, we must evaluate both global and local impacts simultaneously. Industry demand for fossil fuels drives social dysfunction locally. In turn, the local dysfunction has correlating global impacts. One illustration of this is the prospect of culture loss when corporations encircle disenfranchised Indigenous Peoples and the people(s) struggle to balance the economics of cultural recovery with customary law concerning stewardship.

In Canada, dysfunctional corporations – which are non-functional in their short-sighted accounting systems<sup>32</sup> – are eyeing the sizeable territories of Indigenous Peoples, where many communities face ‘Third World’ conditions yet are described as ‘Fourth World’ because of the extent of colonial poverty. The dynamic has intensified from land grabs to land assembly, as companies seek access for the massive infrastructure investments linked to pipelines and refineries (especially for crude oil refineries, whose profit margins are rising). This brings a new set of geopolitical considerations amid land rights conflicts, negotiations, litigation and reconciliation initiatives.

The national political landscape in Canada, framed by outdated concepts of bilateral Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations, is now upended by transnational corporations, whose ‘war chests’ dwarf other corporate budgets for community outreach. Nexen Energy, a petroleum corporation purchased by China for \$15.1

billion in 2013 via CNOOC Ltd., dominates the oil sands in the province of Alberta. Petronas, a state-owned company of Malaysia, is making headlines in the province of British Columbia (BC).

In 2015 Petronas offered the remote Lax Kw’alaams community (population 3,350) of the Tsimshian People an eye-popping \$1.15 billion for their approval of a proposed LNG terminal on Lelu Island, Pacific NorthWest LNG: a \$36 billion investment that would include a pipeline. This project, key to government plans to export LNG to Asia, would have a 25-year lifespan. So far, the proposed site has been rejected (because it would harm salmon, a culturally significant fish), but the proposal itself remains under community consideration, prompting speculative purchases of land by retail property developers. Exxon is also courting Lax Kw’alaams for a \$25 billion LNG project, West Coast Canada LNG.

Elsewhere in BC, Indigenous Peoples and/or communities already have opted for provisional approval or partnerships for similar projects, due to poverty fatigue. The Squamish First Nation has set conditions for approval of the Woodfibre LNG project – which is a subsidiary of Pacific Oil & Gas Ltd. of Singapore – including its own environmental assessment process. The Haisla First Nation has endorsed the LNG Canada project, led by Royal Dutch Shell PLC, the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS), Mitsubishi and PetroChina. The Malahat First Nation is proposing an offshore facility and undersea pipeline in partnership with Steelhead LNG (a company led by a former executive of Shell International).

A voice of opposition to the LNG frenzy is Dave Ige, Governor of tourism-soaked Hawaii, who has rejected imports of LNG from BC, saying ‘It’s time to focus our efforts on renewables’.<sup>33</sup> Still, despite reports that LNG is not credible as a ‘bridging’ fuel,<sup>34</sup> investment enthusiasm is not slowing. Many Indigenous Peoples understandably want LNG perks and ownership – in other words, a re-

turn to economic independence – after the historic and game-changing *Tsilhqot'in* court decision (2014) in Canada, which recognised their legal title to ancestral lands.<sup>35</sup>

The BC government is brokering many of the deals and defusing concerns over environmental impacts. Fracking by Progress Energy – another project of Malaysia's Petronas – has caused earthquakes of as much as 4.4 magnitude, yet will continue once basic mitigation plans are filed.<sup>36</sup> New LNG projects will be staggered to 2020 or later, as the Asian market price for LNG recuperates. This means an extended horizon for fossil fuel impacts provincially, nationally and globally.

### Industry spinoffs: a real snapshot of tourism

Should we applaud the economic spinoffs of tourism, benefiting Indigenous Peoples in Canada? Is this a glimpse of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in action?

The emergence of Indigenous Peoples as energy power-holders in Canada is an offshoot of 'pro-poor' tourism ideology, which promotes tourism as a stimulus across sectors. If we decipher the investment web, the same 'pro-poor' ideology facilitating tourism growth also appears in oil and gas proposals, helping government to circumvent historic grievances while maintaining conventional business. On record, the massive public-private partnerships for fossil fuels extraction enable government to deliver economic development to rural areas, claiming that it brings prosperity for involved communities. Informally, however, they essentially privatise reparations for colonialism, deferring state financial liability. Transnational corporations become part of the 'benefactor' apparatus of the state.

Within 'pro-poor' ideology, there is hoopla over industry benefits such as career training and jobs, but little mention of costs or liabilities – such as Petronas' performance audit revealing past safety issues which could

cause 'massive' harm to both the environment and people.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, new opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in the political economy of energy are fuelling rifts, along classic 'jobs versus environment' lines. An anti-LNG rally took place in Vancouver in October 2015, drawing 180 protesters from disparate interest groups, but largely environment-focused.

Among the Wet'suwet'en People, hereditary and elected chiefs hold differing views on LNG pipelines, some split by clan; representatives of the Unist'ot'en clan have tended a protest camp for several years and now are blocking construction crews, which were granted access by the elected band council. The Pacific Trails and Coastal GasLink pipelines to Kitimat, BC, thus offer an instructive example of how divisive 'pro-poor' platforms can be. The neighbouring Haisla People, who reside near Kitimat, are chiming in, calling on the Wet'suwet'en to resolve their internal impasse without court or police action – so that investments can proceed. Nonetheless, a new regional alliance of Indigenous leaders has emerged opposing fracking on the basis of customary law.<sup>38</sup>

As this plays out, the Allied Tribes of nearby Lax Kw'alaams are launching court action to protect fishing rights from LNG development. A hereditary chief of the Gitwilyoots tribe of Lax Kw'alaams has been instrumental in establishing a protest camp on Lelu Island to block Petronas. Yet other hereditary chiefs of Lax Kw'alaams say the protest camp is unauthorised and have given Petronas conditional access to Lelu Island for studies. Beyond Lax Kw'alaams, two other communities of the Tsimshian People – Metlakatla and Kitselas – already are negotiating benefit-sharing agreements with Petronas. Metlakatla has declared its overlapping title to Lelu Island and support for the intended Petronas pipeline.

Thus, a crisis of representation is underway among the Wet'suwet'en, Tsimshian and other peoples neighbouring the coveted deep sea ports,

over monetary versus spiritual values. Agreement is elusive, because each is grappling with colonial legacies such as poverty, inter-generational trauma, suicides, social isolation and culture loss – in the midst of competitive bargaining with corporations.

Alongside these community implosions over LNG, many Indigenous Peoples are leading coalition protests against crude oil being transported through their territories via tankers, railways and the Northern Gateway and Keystone XL pipelines. Indigenous women have become vocal in protests since the Idle No More movement. Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa recently stood in solidarity on the frontlines. Still, some individual Indigenous communities are endorsing divisive initiatives, such as the Trans Mountain pipeline.<sup>39</sup> The proposed Eagle Spirit pipeline, which would transport refined bitumen from the Alberta tar sands to the BC coast, has consolidated support – including from Lax Kw'alaams leaders – amid widespread objections to tar sands oil.<sup>40</sup> Many communities desire a profit share (which is viewed as a chance for self-determination), despite reports of the oil-infused Bigstone reserve in Alberta being 'Filthy Rich. Dirt Poor.'<sup>41</sup>

Transnational corporations are adeptly navigating these cultural landscapes. Pacific Future Energy, affiliated with the giant Grupo Salinas of Mexico, enlisted two former chiefs of the national Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo and Ovide Mercredi, plus another prominent regional chief. Engineering firm SNC-Lavalin then recruited the A-in-Chut Business Group, jointly owned by Atleo, to co-create the feasibility study for Pacific Future to build a bitumen refinery for exports to Asia.

Although fissures among affected Indigenous Peoples have become public, and internal concerns about cultural protocols and customary law are mounting, there is one collective reality. As these fossil fuels mega-investments advance – major airlines being linked to the dirtiest of them<sup>42</sup> (namely, the tar sands, which are a climate change tipping point<sup>43</sup>) – ex-



treme weather patterns are hitting locally. During the summer of 2015, both British Columbia and Alberta suffered extreme drought, bringing water bans on farms, uninhabitable river conditions for the salmon cherished across Indigenous cultures in BC, and risk of catastrophic beetle infestations in forests. Extra fire-fighting crews were flown in from South Africa and Australia to contain the extensive forest fires. Evacuation of communities is the new 'norm' as summer becomes the season of wildfires.

With this in mind, it would be prudent to question future impacts of 'pro-poor' tourism spinoffs on the Arctic, among the Inuit and neighbouring peoples, as Russia and other circumpolar nations vie for its oil and gas. It also would be responsible to investigate the irony of Indigenous Peoples being induced (or internally motivated, by systemic colonial poverty) to adopt economic policies which put peoples from the Arctic to Kuna Yala to Tuvalu – plus coastal zones globally – at risk of becoming climate refugees. If Indigenous participation in the national economy heightens biosphere instability, jeopardising future generations, it is a sign of continuing colonial duress and limited opportunities for self-determination.

While 'pro-poor' initiatives seem to ease material poverty – if aloof GDP formulas or short-term household measures are used – participation may come at the price of cultural impoverishment.

### **Governance options: inter-generational care**

Reflecting on this tourism context, we should bear in mind that climate change is just one element of the biosphere crisis driven by tourism, albeit an accelerator of ecosystem damage, biodiversity loss and stresses on endangered species – which in turn deepen the conditions for human rights violations (especially vis-a-vis child welfare, within and between generations).

The dossier on tourism holds star-

ling examples of ethical blindspots – really, of mass dehumanisation. One standout is the human and ecological detritus of sweatshop factories supplying souvenirs: the Topkapi palace trinkets, Monet garden mementos and Kathmandu keychains produced in China, clinching its 30% share of global economic growth and a proportionate rise in global emissions. Another is the toxins seeping from tourism hubs into watersheds, groundwater, ditches, landfills and food chains as 'pristine' accommodations are prepped for tourists, without regard for impacts on local residents' health or the overall bio-accumulation. At hotels and resorts worldwide, each buffet staple such as coffee, bananas, mineral water or fish holds a story,<sup>44</sup> revealing a corporate habit of abbreviated storytelling.

Although UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon provides strong moral leadership on the biosphere crisis, the UN agencies responsible for tourism oversight show little inclination towards crisis response. The UN World Tourism Organisation advocates economic growth; the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) promotes mass tourism to World Heritage Sites; meanwhile, the Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (affiliated with the UN Environment Programme, or UNEP) shepherds a soft, cosmetic makeover for mass tourism. Overall, there is a marketing thrust allegedly about fighting poverty and safeguarding biological and cultural diversity, but which actually inverts the goals, packaging the 'near-extinct', 'disappearing' and 'poor' as value-added products for industry growth. Thus, tourism drives inequality instead of ameliorating living conditions, capabilities and life prospects for humanity's most vulnerable populations.

In the context of the UN's post-2015 development agenda, revisiting the goals for tourism is key to averting catastrophic shifts in the biosphere. Patterns of corporate and consumer behaviour linked to tourism are not sustainable, as the fossil fuels data and wider research attest. On the contrary, they represent a 'sure thing': a

virtual guarantee of a planetary ecological collapse.

The 'green economy' ideology adopted at the last UN Earth Summit (2012) – also known as Rio+20 – has proven particularly damaging in the tourism sector.<sup>45</sup> It has set back innovation by decades. UN agencies are recycling tourism concepts generated in the 1980s-90s (such as 'eco' and 'sustainable' tourism), which industry coopted to maximise growth. A new generation of policy makers – unfamiliar with prior NGO submissions of community-based research on actual impacts – are finding these concepts compelling, although the predictable outcome is more mass tourism.

Given this stalemate, and the prospect of more unfettered industry growth, we need fresh angles from which to understand the severity of tourism impacts on our biosphere, the implications for humanity and specific impacts on children. The UN discourse as presently structured is part of the problem. Tourism is portrayed as a means of meeting sustainable development goals. Instead, tourism should be tackled for what it is: hyper-consumerism. Without this turnaround, transnational corporations will plot a course which scientific consensus tells us is untenable (socially, culturally and ecologically).

To perceive tourism differently, it may be helpful to view it as an intense form of urbanisation: a flow of commerce producing an urbanised world. Urban planner Neil Brenner discusses the biosphere in relation to 'planetary infrastructures' such as tourism.<sup>46</sup> His mapping of global corridors of commerce visualises 'the planetary urban condition', enabling us to see emergent patterns and re-think economics from a standpoint of interconnection. Brenner advises that we should evaluate 'the various forms of dispossession' that are inherent to the capitalist global economy. In doing so, we must acknowledge the inter-generational dispossession presently underway, which is the crux of the biosphere crisis. Spatial planning needs to embrace the well-being of children, including their future pros-

pects.

Fundamentally, we need a concrete discussion about inter-generational care in relation to tourism. One model that exists is the emerging framework for Child Rights Impact Assessment, which uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) as a filter for decision-making. Using this approach, we would use the UNCRC as a baseline to implement the UNFCCC and other international law concerning care of the biosphere. However, the rights of today's children and future generations to a healthy biosphere extend further than the 1989 definition of child rights. They also include the broader human rights of children, as understood through evolving standards and law.

The post-2015 development agenda on tourism must reflect the deepest expressions of the rights of children, to assure inter-generational care. This must include special measures for children, as provided for in international law, to protect today's children and future generations from harm. An ethic of care in the tourism industry will accept no less, in the face of the present biosphere crisis. The Responsibility to Protect doctrine, adopted by the UN Security Council, is our guide. ♦

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# Rise of the aerotropolis

One index of the rapid growth of global tourism is the emergence the world over of the aerotropolis, i.e., a city built around a new or existing airport. Challenging the claim of its proponents that it is a growth engine, *Rose Bridger* says it is a disastrous model of development that must be opposed.

A DISTINCTIVE urban form is emerging all over the world. It's called an 'aerotropolis', or 'airport city'. Inverting the traditional model of airports being built to serve established cities, an aerotropolis is a city built around a new, or existing, airport. Shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, and cultural and leisure facilities are conveniently situated to capture the flow of air passengers. Manufacturing and assembly plants, logistics and distribution complexes are linked with the airport's cargo facilities. The clustered development is designed to be aviation-dependent, to serve the growth of the airport by maximising passenger and cargo throughput.

Flying is the most carbon-intensive mode of transport, and aviation one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, even as the urgency of reducing emissions to prevent devastating climate change becomes ever more evident, a global wave of airport-centric infrastructure development threatens to lock us into an even higher level of fossil fuel dependency. Barely a day goes by without at least one announcement regarding planning, commencement or progress of an aerotropolis somewhere in the world.

The rise of the aerotropolis is also a threat to vast tracts of farmland or wildlife habitats as developers seek out greenfield (undeveloped) sites.

## Non-aeronautical revenue

The secret of success of the world's established major aerotropolis developments – including Schiphol, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Incheon, Dallas/Fort Worth and Kuala Lumpur – is that the airport owns a large area of land surrounding it, and reaps 'non-aeronautical revenue' from commercial development upon it.



Songdo, a city built around Incheon airport in South Korea, is one of the world's major aerotropolis developments.

Aerotropolis pioneers receive income streams from hotels, restaurants, and cultural and entertainment facilities such as exhibition centres extending beyond the airport boundary, capturing passenger expenditure. Office blocks, meeting rooms and conference centres ensure that business travellers spend money on airport land.

Airports also secure income from green space. Golf courses are ubiquitous, an easily replicable commercialised green space that is uniquely compatible with airport operations as the risk of bird strikes – collisions between birds and aircraft that can result in fatal accidents – is minimised, because the manicured monoculture of short grass is inhospitable to insects that attract birdlife. Notable golf courses on airport land include Nine Eagles at Hong Kong Airport, with an island green and night lighting, and Melbourne Airport Golf Club, known for its water features. Much of Kuala Lumpur Airport's 100-square-kilometre land bank remains as oil palm plantations, providing a revenue stream from palm oil sales until construction of more lucrative developments, such as South-East Asia's largest outlet

shopping mall, which opened in May.

Airport income from land can include food and non-food crops, and the two largest aerotropolis developments in the US, Dallas/Fort Worth and Denver airports, profit from fossil fuel extraction. Dallas/Fort Worth Airport was one of the world's first sites for fracking, extracting gas from shale wells on its 73 square kilometres of land. Income from fracking supplements conventional commercial development including shops and hotels. By July 2008, 60 gas wells were in production, but the entire aerotropolis site is carefully landscaped so that people travelling around it will not see a single well.

The aerotropolis uses non-aeronautical revenue to cross-subsidise charges to airlines, such as for landing and navigation. Thus, airlines are incentivised to use the airport, and a symbiotic relationship between growth of the airport and the development clustered around it is established. An aerotropolis may proclaim itself 'self-sustaining', but it achieves this status only by virtue of being gifted the land for revenue generation, which is a form of subsidy.



**Flying is the most carbon-intensive mode of transport, and aviation one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions.**

### The ultimate all-inclusive

Holidays with an ever-increasing proportion of visitors' time and money spent on airport-owned land herald the dawn of a tourism model that resembles the cruise ship industry, where, as well as accommodation, as much as possible is provided on board – meals, casinos, cinemas and other entertainment, and leisure facilities such as gyms. Passengers only leave the boat for excursions. Little economic benefit filters down to the local community, which nevertheless has to contend with hordes of visitors and high concentrations of health-damaging diesel pollution from plumes of dense black smoke belching out of the cruise ship funnel.

Air pollution from planes is invisible, but people living near airports and under takeoff and approach flight paths are exposed to high levels of aircraft noise, which is a causal factor in illnesses including heart conditions and strokes. And evidence is mounting that the cocktail of air pollutants emitted by aircraft causes serious health problems including respiratory conditions and certain types of cancer.

The intensive industrialisation that enables flight – most importantly the vast amounts of concrete and the aviation fuel supply chain all the way to airport fuel tanks that can hold millions of litres – is hidden. In the same vein, aerotropolis tourists are profoundly ignorant of the harsh realities of poverty, ecological destruction and dissent outside the tourism complex bubble. Visitors have no genuine learn-

ing or interaction with the local community, and are oblivious to what has been destroyed to gain quick and convenient access to a desirable destination. Their experience in the aerotropolis resembles airport passenger terminals – funnelled through retail, advertising and whimsical representations of local wildlife and culture. Separate from the aerotropolis facilities for tourists, devoid of the veneer of artworks and architectural flourishes maintaining a pretence of local specificity, there is a cargo complex, an area colonised by a rectilinear grid of identikit ugly grey rectangular sheds.

### Exclusion

The title of the book *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next*, by Professor John Kasarda, the most high-profile proponent of the aerotropolis, and Greg Lindsay, a journalist and speaker, implies futuristic settlements in which all of humankind will be welcome to participate. In reality, the aerotropolis is built for a privileged minority – a hypermobile elite of frequent flyers criss-crossing the globe for power-broking meetings in airport business premises, pampering themselves in luxurious hotels, and shopping in vast duty-free malls.

Aerotropolis projects are instant cities built to a standardised template, the very opposite of the incremental involvement of a multitude of civic organisations that characterises the history of the world's enduring cultural centres. An aerotropolis has a

high degree of autonomy over activity on land it owns, and local communities have little or no control over planning and governance. Construction often begins with erection of a fence to keep out the local population and eviction of people living within it. For example, the Nepalese government has allocated funds to fence off an 80-square-kilometre site for the planned second Kathmandu airport. Mainly forested land, it hosts a resident community of 6,000 people, mainly from the marginalised Tamang community, who face displacement and are concerned over how they will be rehabilitated.

Citizens were not even informed that Istanbul's third airport is actually a vast aerotropolis. The 77-square-kilometre site, predominantly forested land and also lakes and farmland, is being systematically destroyed by swarms of bulldozers and earth-moving trucks. Campaigners opposing construction of the airport discovered the plans through research on investors and contractors. The emerging aerotropolis is a key component of a megaproject complex which also comprises a third bridge across the Bosphorus Strait, a canal alongside it, and multilane highways. All feed each other's growth. Istanbul's aerotropolis plan is inspired by the artificial concrete jungle that is Dubai, to the extent that it plans its own temple to hyperconsumerism – the world's biggest duty-free shopping mall.

An aerotropolis requires heavy-handed, centralised planning and enforcement, so it is not surprising that the largest aerotropolis developments progress unimpeded in autocratic countries in the Middle East. Dubai's new airport, Al Maktoum, is the starting point for Dubai World Central, on 140 square kilometres of land.

Like Istanbul's third airport, Kilimanjaro Airport plans to emulate Dubai, claiming 110 square kilometres of land, long occupied by Maasai pastoralists, as its 'estate', triggering protests by 10,000 people threatened with loss of land and livelihood.

In India's Andhra Pradesh state, massive protest by thousands of farmers facing dispossession for a 60-

square-kilometre aerotropolis at Bhogapuram led to reduction of the project area to 20 square kilometres. India's first aerotropolis at Andal, in West Bengal, has been stalled by land disputes since 2009, but became operational in May. An 'industrial township' is planned around the airport. Citizens subsidise Andal aerotropolis – it is lavished with tax exemptions – but they have no control over it as it has been granted authority to sanction building and to collect taxes. It is becoming a mini-city with its own laws.

### Economic enclaves

All aerotropolis projects claim to be 'growth engines' or 'economic engines', a panacea that will inevitably result in miraculous prosperity for the wider region. A more apt description of an aerotropolis, however, is 'economic enclave'. The aviation industry already benefits from tax exemptions on aviation fuel for international flights and duty-free shopping. Typically, at least part of the aerotropolis site is designated as a 'free trade zone' (which might go under another name such as 'special economic zone') bringing a slew of tax exemptions and other subsidies, all geared to minimising the costs of international trade, accelerating corporate growth and maximising profits. Connective infrastructure, a road network encompassing ring roads and access roads, water and power supply, plus a high-speed fibre-optic network, without which the aerotropolis could not operate, is typically publicly funded.

Claims that an aerotropolis galvanises the economy of the surrounding region are belied by the intention that these developments become 'destinations in their own right', with visitors spending as much time, and money, as possible on airport land. The aim is not to create wealth in the wider region, but to concentrate wealth on airport property. Facilities like malls and entertainment centres also capture trade from the resident population, and the result is to drain rather than boost the local economy. The relationship of an aerotropolis to its hinterland is essentially parasitic.



A retail area within Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. In an aerotropolis, as in airport passenger terminals, visitors are funnelled through retail and advertising with no genuine interaction with the local community.

### Taking on the aerotropolis

Aerotropolis plans might seem like pie in the sky, overambitious schemes that will never actually materialise. Common sense dictates that they cannot all achieve ambitions of becoming 'global hubs' or 'global gateways'. But major aerotropolis schemes are among the biggest megaprojects being imposed by a fusion of government and corporate power. Gargantuan schemes progress on a piecemeal basis, the requisite physical and regulatory infrastructure slotting into place.

Aerotropolis plans with astronomical growth projections for passenger numbers and cargo volumes, such as Istanbul's third airport's projections for 150 million passengers per year and the new Mexico City airport's masterplan for six runways, may well prove unfeasible. But it is certain that land is being allocated and there will likely be an airport and some degree of aeronautical activity and commercial development that utilises air services. Several local opposition campaigns suspect the aerotropolis is a pretext for a land grab, under which land is handed over to corporations for real estate speculation, for example Istanbul's third airport, the planned Bhogapuram airport and Taoyuan Aerotropolis on 37 square kilometres of prime farmland.

Kasarda was right when he described the aerotropolis as 'the physi-

cal incarnation of globalisation'. It is an urban form providing physical infrastructure, and a supportive regulatory framework, for turbocharging corporate globalisation. Whilst local opposition to aerotropolis projects is widespread, there is remarkably little critical analysis or opposition from NGOs or academia. An audacious move of global networked capitalism is slipping under the radar. The aerotropolis is a disastrous model of development, a neoliberal nightmare that must be vigorously opposed. A new organisation, the Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement (GAAM), has been formed to bring together movements for social, economic and environmental justice to build resistance, research and raise awareness of the aerotropolis, support affected communities and build an international campaign community. ♦

*Rose Bridger is a founder member of the Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement (GAAM) and the author of Plane Truth: Aviation's Real Impact on People and the Environment, published by Pluto Press.*

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# Tourism for women's rights?

The prevailing oppressive and exploitative tourism industry cannot be allowed to take centrestage in the garb of protection and promotion of women's rights, says *Albertina Almeida*.

IN the dominant discourse by nation-states on gender concerns, tourism is touted as a medium for peace, women's empowerment, employment and economic advancement. It is also projected as providing agency to women. These claims sweep under the carpet the very commodification of whole peoples and of women that is taking place in the name of tourism.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women convened by the United Nations in Beijing in 1995, provided an opening, albeit a narrow one, to put the gender scanner on the tourism industry. The BPFA specifically recognised violence against women as a critical area of concern, being an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, and noted the impacts of tourism by way of calling for the effective suppression of trafficking of women and girls for the sex trade within this critical area of concern. It invited the UN Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to address within her mandate and as a matter of urgency the issue of sex tourism.

In her report to the Commission on Human Rights in 2000,<sup>1</sup> the Special Rapporteur noted that poverty and unemployment increase opportunities for trafficking and breed forms such as sex tourism in addition to the established forms of trafficking, which are incompatible with the equal enjoyment of rights by women and with respect for their rights and dignity and put women at special risk of violence and abuse. The lack of rights afforded to women serves as the primary causative factor at the root of both women's migration and trafficking in women.

But within trafficking, sex tourism as such did not encounter a special scrutiny, obviously on the

grounds that it was just a by-product of some tourism gone bad, or just some trafficking masquerading as tourism. The entire character and basis of the dominant tourism industry did not come under the Special Rapporteur's lens, even as 1995 already saw neoliberal politics and globalisation sweep Asian countries.

## Implementation of the BPFA

Given that gender concerns on tourism were reduced to violence against women, one of 12 critical areas of concern within the BPFA, ironically, 20 years down the line when nation-states were called upon to take stock of the implementation of the BPFA, tourism was in fact reported by nation-states to be a booster for women in so far as the other critical areas of concern go. It was seen as a medium for boosting employment for women, a clean non-polluting industry, an industry that helps women break the glass ceiling. There was not even a deeper look at the links between sex tourism and trafficking as a form of violence against women.

Countries presented reports taking stock of implementation of the BPFA during the 'Beijing+20' deliberations at the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) in March.<sup>2</sup> A perusal of some of the reports from Asian countries, in terms of how they address trafficking and in terms of the role they see for tourism, is instructive in understanding where the problem lies and imagining a different perspective in action.

Take India's report, which brags about adopting a Code of Conduct for 'Safe and Honourable Tourism' to aid the prevention of prostitution, sex tourism and forms of sexual exploitation like assaults and molestation in tourism, to safeguard the safety of

persons, including women and children. The Indian government got this Code 'voluntarily' signed by some leading stakeholders on World Tourism Day 2010. Peer through it and you will see that it is a retreat from India's own laws, which make it compulsory – not just voluntary – for stakeholders to comply with laws related to trafficking, sexual violence and representation in the media through sexually explicit images. Is this yet another example of corporate social responsibility that seeks to evade or dilute corporate legal responsibility?

The Philippines reported that with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), it tried addressing credit constraints for small and medium enterprises, particularly in relation to problems of inadequate collateral and developing a winning business proposal that is acceptable for loan applications. The project also aimed to promote increased trade and investment through better provision of infrastructure and increased competitiveness of key industries such as tourism. There was no explanation for the basis of this collaborative project nor a status report of the project. This would naturally leave the reader seized with curiosity as to whether USAID, whose funding conditionalities include non-support for abortion, could at all appreciate the problems that trafficking of women for tourism brings about; whether USAID, whose economic policies attribute bad economics to merely corruption in the literal sense, would not overlook the displacement from land and livelihoods that dominant economic models cause.

The Philippines Commission for Women is stated to have adopted a policy for economic empowerment of women through gender-responsive ecotourism. What does that mean?

Tourists/locals warned against sexual harassment? Women in leadership positions in tourist enterprises? But what about the base of the dominant ecotourism industry which fails to address the structural issues of inequality and is founded on disregard for communities already marginalised by caste and class, who are compelled to either live controlled lives or exit these ecotourism spots? The policy of enjoining the Tourism Promotion Board to make the tourism marketing campaigns gender-sensitive, seems to be the lone lantern illuminating the trajectory of the tourism industry for women's rights.

Malaysia also flagged tourism skills acquired by women as worthy of incubation under the Single Mother Skills Incubation Programme, to encourage generation of income based on these skills, without even considering the structural character of the tourism industry today that is increasingly condominium-ising various tourism products, where independent small and medium entrepreneurs have no chance to survive being swallowed by mega-tourism in the era of global corporate capital. So a tiny shack is not acceptable and may be accompanied by the attendant insecurities of yearly allotment, apart from various other hurdles placed by starred tourist resorts which see them as obstacles to good business in their own restaurants. The overall suppressive trend of dispensing with small businesses and glamorising brand names is simply not addressed. What needs to change is 'the playing field upon which commerce has continued to play the game over the past 200 years', as the World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises expressed in its statement circulated at CSW59.<sup>3</sup>

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2007 enacted by Malaysia made the salutary provision of not prosecuting trafficked victims for illegal entry with fraudulent documents. But this would by no means address the issue of forced prostitution within the ambit of the tourism industry, a prostitution that is forced by economic circumstances. Malaysia's report itself acknowledges that it has set up a

National Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants, headed by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Home Affairs, in order to make Malaysia internationally accredited as being free of illegal activities in connection with human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. The language of women's rights took a backseat.

Nepal's review is even more disturbing. The report brazenly stated that Nepal wished to upgrade itself from Tier Two to Tier One under the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol, hence merely pitching for a better place under the UN sun, without at all trying to redress the prevailing circumstances that drive women to become victims of trafficking, which the UN Special Rapporteur has well documented. So attention is focused on the symptoms rather than the disease in recognising trafficking of young girls and women in the domestic sex industry operating under the ambit of the entertainment sector. Ire is channelled towards proposing bans on this domestic industry under moralist garb, rather than improvement of the working conditions of women in the entertainment or hospitality industry as a whole, or a scrutiny of the entertainment industry managed by the dominant transnational and domestic players.

Kyrgyzstan's review offers some attempt at structural redressal by making a beginning towards establishing a system of indicators on trafficking significant for improving gender statistics. It would help to know whether these indicators were developed through participatory processes. Contrast the state's report with the statement of the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan circulated at CSW59. It makes a clear reference to economic losses of women leading to dramatic migration of rural women, who become subjected to discrimination on many grounds abroad. Forced migration for rural women to entertainment industries, even to other Asian countries which exploit, is so visible! State policy changes should be accompanied by means of implementation, including adequate finances, should in-

volve regular result-based accountability from all development actors, and should be based on local women's needs, the Forum of Women's NGOs has demanded.

The review from Japan acknowledged that child prostitution is committed by Japanese nationals abroad, that it furthers trafficking in persons in the countries concerned, and that efforts were made to raise awareness of potential perpetrators through posters and distribution of leaflets at travel agencies and passport centres in Japan. The report however failed to look at systemic issues, which is probably what prompted the New Japan Women's Association to point out that increasing poverty, that is feminisation of poverty, is to be attributed to the financial circle's neoliberal strategy backed by government policies. This it saw as 'increasing low-paid and unstable non-regular workers with no rights, while adversely revising the social security system to deepen poverty and to widen the gap between rich and poor'. The Association called upon its government not to lift regulations on the use of temporary agency workers, 'which will undermine the very basis for working women to be self-reliant'. It also asserted the need for implementation, stating that agreements and commitments are just not enough.

### Post-2015 development agenda

Several of the statements taking stock of the implementation of the BPFA have reiterated in different words that the critical financial situation of developing countries and deepening inequalities between countries have made the achievement of the BPFA and the Millennium Development Goals unreachable. The International Muslim Women's Union, for instance, called upon the international community to support the developing countries by working to relieve debts and lift sanctions, so as to enable them to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Already at CSW58, an expert group report had clearly in-

dicted the prevailing neoliberal economic model as incapable of supporting gender-equitable sustainable development.

The political declaration by nation-states at CSW59<sup>4</sup> emphasised that ‘the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential for achieving the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and for tackling the critical remaining challenges through a transformative and comprehensive approach in the post-2015 development agenda, including through the sustainable development goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in its report, which shall be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognising that other inputs will also be considered, in the intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and also through the integration of a gender perspective into the post-2015 development agenda’.

Women the world over have been declaring they do not want empty promises that the governments will later say are not implementable or will not or cannot hold themselves accountable for. The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, in its statement, reiterated the importance of transforming the macroeconomic environment and of a commitment to ‘international trade, finance and investment arrangements that support and complement national efforts to develop sustainably and equitably’. The conclusion of the deliberations at CSW59 with only a resolve to fully implement the BPFA, but no accountability for non-compliance and no redressal of the problems of macroeconomic policies that proactively enable women’s rights violations, is disconcerting in great measure.

With the Beijing+20 deliberations concluded and with the final stamp on the post-2015 development

agenda, it is necessary to look at how tourism is being positioned vis-a-vis the post-2015 agenda. A presentation made by David Randle,<sup>5</sup> CEO of the WHALE Center on Sustainable Tourism Development, as part of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) delegation to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which is the main UN platform on sustainable development, holds portents of what is to come and to be justified in the name of sustainable development. It is worth examining in order to highlight what a manicured projection and implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the post-2015 agenda can look like and mean, particularly for women.

### Unravelling tourism claims

To start with, tourism has been justified as an industry that can offer means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as it contributes to 9% of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP). It is projected as one of the strongest drivers of world trade and prosperity and hence possessing wealth-creating power to alleviate poverty. What is not said is that GDP is a measure of ‘economic growth’ that is about the gross value of goods and services produced for the market. It does not consider who the profits from these goods and services go to – the proportion that goes to the women who run small and medium tourism enterprises, for instance – therefore leaving the foundation of inequality and injustice intact.

Randle also said tourism can end hunger by better feeding the world’s hungry through promoting sustainable agriculture so that 50% of all food is sourced locally and waste is diverted to the poor, used for compost for farmers or as an energy source. An example that was given to illustrate this was of the Walt Disney World theme park, which was said to provide 704,845 pounds of food to feed the hungry in three different Florida counties. Randle also said Disney produces about 11,000 tons of compost each year, most of which is given to

farmers. There are no figures, however, to check the inflation that tourism in an unequal world causes, which hikes up prices of the staple food of host communities and takes it off their plates, or leaves the women who are saddled with home budgeting shouldering the burden of juggling scarce real money for various basic necessities. As for the contribution to compost, it would have to be measured against the loss of composting potential due to occupation and consumption of huge tracts of land by such massive tourism projects.

The point is also sought to be made that the tourism industry requires a healthy environment to succeed and that the industry will find it in its best interests to assist people to reconnect with nature and inspire them to take action to protect the Earth. Tourism resorts and destinations do indeed require healthy environments to attract visitors. But the massive tourism enterprise kills the very nature goose that lays the golden environment, by consuming it beyond its carrying capacity. And when the environment is killed, it simply moves to greener pastures, literally and figuratively, casting on women a triple burden of gender, poverty and displacement from livelihoods. The healthy lifestyle practices that tourism is said to promote, by way of exercise, stress management and safety, may be necessary and affordable for the leisure-seeking tourists, not the women from the host communities on whom the burden of organising that leisure is substantially cast.

Another argument sought to be advanced on the side of sustainable development through tourism is that tourism, if developed sustainably, brings improved water and sanitation to a local area. It is said that ‘tourism, unlike other businesses, has incentive to provide safe water and sanitation to both attract visitors and encourage them to return’, but what this claim hides is that this is about safe water and sanitation for tourists, often at the cost of lowering groundwater tables and diverting finances away from sustainable water infrastructure for the locals, driving women to walk long



distances to fetch water.

When the industry speaks of using affordable and reliable energy, it completely masks the subsidies for electricity to hotels including starred hotels, which come at the cost of raising the rates for electricity consumption by the common person, again casting on women the burden of juggling the dwindling household budget.

The goal of reducing inequality within and between countries and promoting gender equality is made to seem achievable through such means as signing of codes of ethics and token awards for women artisans. This completely misses the point about structural inequalities which was the basis of this strong demand in the first place.

A myth surrounding tourism is about the jobs it generates and the driver that it is for economic growth. It is not that tourism cannot create jobs and drive economic growth, but that has to happen by reviewing the indicators of growth as well as assessing what kind of jobs it creates, and marginalised sections, including women, must be involved in envisioning that tourism.

The tourism industry has been portrayed as having demonstrated the capability to change production and consumption patterns, with targets of reducing waste in landfills to zero. This again is possible and desirable, but will they seriously work on these targets? Studies on non-gradable waste generation and disposal suggest otherwise. Even sewage treatment plants are known to be switched on by starred resorts only when inspecting officials are about to land on site – all for the sake of reaping higher profits by saving on the operation of such plants. The consequences for health are borne by the host communities and again an excruciating burden is felt by women, who suffer both because they are traditionally involved with healthcare work and also because the best of healthcare and healthcare service providers is now being diverted towards medical tourism.

The tourism industry is also per-

ceived as having an inbuilt feature that promotes world peace and cultural understanding. Mark Twain seems to come to its aid through his quote, 'Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.' 'Tourism can help create better understanding of different cultures and traditions and at times engage in track II diplomacy,' David Randle asserts.

Contrast this with E Bernstein and E Shih's article,<sup>6</sup> where they conclude that 'reality tours' also serve to confirm 'what participants have already learned to feel and to believe prior to travelling, perhaps because commercially packaged tours, by their very nature, must resist political complexity, in order to appeal to a dedicated market niche of consumers'. You have a distorted picture of what tourism can do unless and until its structural base is interrogated. How can peace be fostered so simplistically between peoples who are divided along the lines of class, caste, gender, and where there exists discrimination on grounds of disability, age and sexual orientation?

### An opportunity

Randle himself says every crisis is a danger and an opportunity. Indeed. So may we seize the opportunity of the post-2015 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals and targets to bring them down to the earth on which they are located?

As the International Alliance of Women has pointed out in its statement at CSW59, a post-2015 framework must ensure that the international financial system works to advance gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights. A critical challenge concerning the implementation of Beijing+20 has been the ongoing financial, economic and social crisis which has affected most regions of the world and has had particularly adverse effects for women by, for instance, directing attention away from gender equality objectives towards seemingly pressing policy imperatives such as establishing aus-

terity measures.

At the very least, implementation of the post-2015 development agenda must contextualise the targets for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set. The responsibility for implementation by developed countries, transnational actors and dominant local actors cannot be the same as that cast on individuals on the margins and on local communities.

The prevalently oppressive and exploitative tourism industry cannot be allowed to take centrestage in the garb of protection and promotion of women's rights, and of the post-2015 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>7</sup> ♦

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### Endnotes

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# Maasai fight eviction from Tanzanian community land by US-based ecotourism company

Pastoralist land in Tanzania is under threat because of commercial agriculture and conservation. In some places 'philanthropic' ecotourism companies also add to the problem. This article focuses on a case in Loliondo.

**Susanna Nordlund**

IN Loliondo, the northern division of Ngorongoro district, near Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, Thomson Safaris, a safari company from Boston, USA, claims to be developing 12,617 acres of Maasai grazing land into a model for community-based tourism and conservation initiatives, with the goal of fostering a symbiotic relationship made possible by ecotourism. It calls the land its private Enashiva Nature Refuge (or sometimes Eastern Serengeti Nature Refuge).

The Maasai on whose land Thomson's project takes place, on their part, report about harassment, beatings and arrests of 'trespassers', and three villages surrounding the nature refuge are, with the support of Minority Rights Group International, involved in a court case to regain their land.

The tour operator from Boston came to claim ownership and right to manage Maasai land after 10,000 acres in Soitsambu village were in 1984-85 allocated to the then parastatal Tanzania Breweries Ltd (TBL) for barley cultivation. The minutes of the meeting in which the village council is supposed to have agreed to the land transfer look highly anomalous and are in the name of 'Sukenya village'. Sukenya was at the time a sub-village of Soitsambu, and would not become a village until a quarter-century later. TBL cultivated 100 of the 10,000 acres in 1985-86 and 700 acres in 1986-87 while the Maasai continued using the rest of the

land as before. Thereafter TBL stopped cultivation altogether and left due to conditions that were too dry for barley and due to opposition.

In 2003-04, many years after having left, TBL managed to secure, despite allegations of forgery by the Maasai, a 99-year 'certificate of occupancy'

for 12,617 acres, which they then put up for sale in 2006. This is how Thomson Safaris, through its sister company created for this purpose, Tanzania Conservation Ltd, came to buy Maasai land. These companies are subsidiaries of the parent company Wineland-Thomson Adventures Inc., owned by Rick Thomson and Judi Wineland.

Since Thomson's intention was to create its own private nature refuge, it started restricting grazing on land that the Maasai depended on for the cattle on which their livelihoods and culture are based. Needless to say, this required use of force, and herders risked beatings and arrests when accessing grazing or the nearest watering point in the 'nature refuge'.

Maasai resistance has been made difficult due to elaborate divide-and-rule tactics. Thomson did not need to develop these tactics, which were already in use by the central government and another investor in the area: Otterlo Business Corporation (OBC),



**Maasai in Loliondo, Tanzania. Maasai villages in the area are involved in a court case against a US-based safari company that has developed a 'nature refuge' on their grazing land.**

which organises hunting for the highest levels of United Arab Emirates society and was granted the hunting block – right to hunt in Loliondo – in 1992 without the consent of the Maasai.

OBC does not claim to own any land, but with its authority from the government it has caused much abuse and conflict trying to manage it. This is aggravated by a system in which the District Commissioner – the highest central government representative in the district – and district officials work for the interests of the central government and investors against the interests of local people.

The main threat by OBC is against 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> of dry-season grazing land bordering Serengeti National Park (there was already a huge loss of land when the Maasai had to leave the national park in 1959). In 2009 there were violent extrajudicial evictions from this area by a special police force, the Field Force Unit, and OBC's rangers. A 7-year-old girl,

Nashipai Gume, was lost in the evictions and has not been found.

People eventually moved back, but in 2010-11 a draft district land use plan – paid for by OBC, as its managing director had told the press – was revealed which proposed turning the 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> into a protected area (not protected from hunting). This plan was strongly rejected by the District Council, and the government seemed to back off. Then in 2013 the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism at the time made statements that the 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> would be taken from the Maasai for a protected area – but he did this in a very roundabout way, pretending that the whole of Loliondo was protected and the Maasai would be generously ‘given’ the remaining land.

After many meetings and protest delegations to Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, Prime Minister Pinda in September of the same year revoked the threat in a speech – but this has still not been put in writing. In August 2012 the online petition site Avaaz had, without much explanation or detail, launched a petition against the threat posed by OBC, and this led to more international coverage that, while of great help, was unfortunately not always very fact-based.

The land occupied by Thomson is just outside the 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> and adding to the problem. There are three Maasai sections in Loliondo – the Purko, the Loita and the Laitayok – and OBC has focused on working with Laitayok leaders to divide and rule. Thomson has done the same, and the same leaders that express support for OBC also do so for Thomson.

Soitsambu has over the past five years been split up into several villages, and Enashiva Nature Refuge now falls within the areas of Sukenya and Mondorosi villages. Thomson has tried to use this to its advantage, but the villages have joined in a court case to get back the land. This case is based on the fact that the land had returned to the Maasai through adverse possession due to TBL’s long absence



**Thomson Safaris has been very active and aggressive in online PR for Enashiva Nature Refuge (pic).**

before transferring it to Thomson for a paltry \$1.2 million.

### **Accounts of arrests and beatings**

Through the years there have been many accounts of arrests and beatings by Thomson’s guards together with the police. Visitors have experienced how young herders run away in a panic upon seeing a vehicle.

In 2008 Lesinko Nanyoi from Enadooshoke next to the nature refuge was shot in the jaw, having to spend months in hospital, after the police were called in to deal with a confrontation between herders and Thomson guards, and started shooting. Authorities absolved both the guards and the police of blame for the shooting, and Lesinko is yet to see any justice.

In 2012-13 Thomson dragged a group of herders, two minors included, to court for ‘trespass’. The case was eventually dismissed since the herders had a good lawyer from the Legal and Human Rights Centre and the plaintiffs were contradicting themselves.

In January 2014 several herders were beaten up by Thomson’s guards and the police, and taken to the tour operator’s camp. This angered warriors (young men) who wanted to burn down the camp, and the police fired shots into the air.

Thomson has through the years – with minor adjustments according to time and to who is asking – flatly

denied any wrongdoing and claimed to be victims of a minority with selfish interests that are spreading lies about it. How specific it is about this minority varies, but many have heard the story narrowed down to the founder and director of the non-governmental Pastoral Women’s Council, Maanda Ngoitiko, who was born and raised just north of the land that Thomson claims ownership to. In April this year Ngoitiko was named Tanzania’s Rural Human Rights Defender of 2014 by the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition.

Thomson has also been very active and aggressive in online PR for Enashiva Nature Refuge, and has received several awards, not least one from the Tanzania Tourist Board in 2009 for the nature refuge.

Charity is one weapon in Thomson’s war for managing Maasai land. This is also something it shares with OBC. Its charitable branch FoTZC has built classrooms and teachers’ housing with funds raised from former tourists. Thomson is very proud of a women’s group that sells beadwork to its tourists. It has also built a dispensary in Sukenya; in May 2015 there were protests against the land grab and against the increasingly ‘investor-friendly’ – now voted out – MP for Ngorongoro, Telele, who was there to inaugurate the dispensary. The Minister for Health who had also been flown in left early because of the protests.

Foreigners wanting to report about Thomson have got into trouble: In 2008 a photographer from New Zealand, Trent Keegan, who wanted to investigate alleged attacks on the Maasai had told friends he was worried for his own safety after being approached by the police and Thomson’s guards. He then decided to leave Tanzania for Nairobi. Tragically, a few days later, he was found beaten to death in a drainage ditch in the Kenyan capital. Keegan’s laptop and phone were stolen, but not his money and credit card. Two men charged in 2008 with his death (al-



legedly in the course of a robbery) were acquitted for lack of evidence, as was another man in 2011.

Keegan's friend Brian MacCormaic from Ireland, who was working as an adviser to a school in the area, met with Rick Thomson and Judi Wineland to inform them about the complaints the Maasai had against their employees on the ground. When MacCormaic wanted to leave the meeting, the atmosphere became threatening; he was held up by 10 armed men arriving in a Thomson vehicle and not let go until after phone calls were made to the Irish Embassy and the Regional Commissioner. Later, outside the District Commissioner's office, Thomson's manager Daniel Yamat boasted to MacCormaic about having files from his laptop. Later in a meeting, this manager, according to those present, also presented files that appeared to be from Keegan's laptop to the District Commissioner.

In 2009 British journalist Alex Renton and photographer Caroline Irby visited Enashiva Nature Refuge with an invitation from Thomson's manager in Arusha. The local manager Yamat refused to answer questions, and some 10 minutes after leaving, the reporters were picked up by the police. They were taken by the police to the District Commissioner's office, after which they were escorted out of the district. The District Commissioner's secretary told them they were acting on a complaint by Thomson.

After having come across this conflict in an online travel forum in May 2008, this writer, in 2010 when on a tourist visit, asked the Ward Executive Officer (WEO) of Soitsambu if what was written on Thomson's website corresponded with reality. The WEO phoned the District Commissioner, who said he would answer my questions, but instead the following morning I was picked up by the police and taken to the Ngorongoro Security Committee. The District Commissioner took my passport and I had to go to Immigration in Arusha, where I was declared a 'prohibited immigrant'. I visited Loliondo in 2011 and 2013 without any problems.

In December 2014 American

journalist Jean Friedman-Rudovsky and photographer Noah Friedman-Rudovsky managed to arrange an interview with Daniel Yamat and were taken to a community meeting arranged by the councillor for Oloipiri, William Alais, whose letter praising Thomson and OBC was published in the *Jamhuri* newspaper that was stoking negative sentiment against the Maasai of Loliondo. Alais wasn't totally happy with the reporters and called up the District Commissioner, and a lengthy and threatening interrogation by the Security Committee followed. What prevented any escalation was the reporters' explanation that they would spend their last day in Loliondo visiting Thomson's projects, talking to their supporters and interviewing Alais. Alais' men were told not to leave the reporters alone, but even so the Thomson supporters they were introduced to had their own complaints about harassment by the company's guards.

In 2010 a British social justice organisation that works, among others, on the issue of land rights in Loliondo received a letter from a London law firm instructed by Thomson. The tour operator wanted to stop this organisation from mentioning it on the organisation's website. An even starker example of Thomson's aggressive litigiousness concerns the Stop Thomson Safaris website, started in 2012 by anonymous people in Tanzania who had seen firsthand the effects of Thomson's occupation on the residents of Loliondo and decided to raise awareness about the situation. These people were sued and had to agree to a settlement to keep their anonymity. The website was taken down.

## Harassment

Local people who speak up against the land threats are often victims of intense harassment. One tactic often employed by authorities and not least certain segments of the Tanzanian press is to accuse them of being 'Kenyan'. The most rabidly 'patriotic' journalist extends this to claiming that 70% of the population of Loliondo would not be Tanzanian.

In June 2015 I went to Loliondo to get further information from the ground, but before I could visit Sukenya and Mondorosi I was arrested, locked up for three nights without being allowed to contact friends and family, and again declared a prohibited immigrant. After being released in Kenya it was discovered that my computer had been seriously tampered with during my arrest.

On the evening of 8 July 2014 Olunjai Timan was looking for cows that had been chased and dispersed by Thomson's guards after his sons had been herding and the cows entered Enashiva Nature Refuge. A Thomson vehicle appeared when Olunjai was on his way home, there was an order to shoot and a bullet hit Olunjai's thigh. He was hospitalised for a week. The identity of the policeman who fired the shot was known, but the only action taken was to transfer him to another area. There were protest meetings and warriors again wanted to burn down Thomson's camp but were calmed down by elders. After more meetings the then District Commissioner and district officials advised Thomson to allow grazing until the court case was over. According to reports, herders have been entering with their animals without suffering any violence.

In court the defendants were to have been heard on 24 July, but the hearings were postponed until September and then the judgment date was set for 28 October, when the court totally failed to protect the land rights of the Maasai, ruling against all but one minor point. The Maasai's lawyers, Wallace N. Kapaya and Rashid S. Rashid, told Minority Rights Group, 'We are tremendously dissatisfied with this judgment and intend to appeal it at the first opportunity. Based on the evidence at trial the court did not come to a fair decision, and this judgment only serves to cement the marginalisation of the Maasai in Ngorongoro in the name of conservation.'

The battle for justice goes on! ♦

*Susanna Nordlund is an independent blogger focusing on land-grabbing 'investors' in Loliondo, Tanzania.*

# The *puputan* struggle against the Benoa Bay reclamation project

Fearful that the project will result in the flooding of some of their villages, the people of Bali have been waging a bitter struggle for the past three years against the reclamation of Benoa Bay which links the island's three important tourist hubs.

*Anton Muhajir reports.*

FIFTY-year-old Pande Ketut Merta has faithfully participated in a street protest for the last three years. In every protest organised by the Forum Rakyat Bali Tolak Reklamasi (ForBALI – Bali People's Forum to Reject Reclamation), he and the people of Benoa Bay are always present, as was the case in July 2015.

About 1,500 people marched from the east side of the the Niti Mandala Park in Denpasar, the civic centre of Bali. In a neat file, they walked about 200 metres towards the Bali Provincial Parliament building, carrying posters and banners and shouting slogans as they walked.

Merta wore a T-shirt bearing the words 'Reject Benoa Bay Reclamation'. For the last three years, I have seen Merta among the thousands of young people participating in such protests. His is a familiar face, always in the frontline.

At times, Merta also made fiery speeches, such as during the July protest. He stood atop a pickup truck and began his oration. 'Benoa Bay is ours, it does not belong to investors. We should not let investors damage it. Reject reclamation of Benoa Bay!' This was instantly followed by the shouts of the participants: 'Reject!'

Layar Priatna is another interesting participant. A year ago, he participated in a protest against the reclamation and took dramatic action. In full traditional Balinese costume, Priatna raised a sword and, with an angry expression, aimed the sword at his chest. Around him some 1,500 people cheered and shouted slogans. 'The people of Bali are prepared to commit *puputan* to stop the Benoa Bay reclamation,' Priatna shouted, before stabbing his chest.



Map of Benoa Bay.

Such an action is called *ngurek* in the Balinese language. It is usually conducted as part of a ritual among the Balinese Hindus. Usually the person conducting *ngurek* will first be in a trance; he will stab his chest very forcefully, but no blood will be spilled and no wound will result.

*Ngurek* is a symbolic act to denote the intention to let go of oneself for a higher purpose. That was the case for Priatna, 40, the coordinator of the Renon Community to Reject Reclamation. For him, *ngurek* is a symbol of willingness to sacrifice himself, even to the extent of committing *puputan*.

*Puputan*, in Balinese terminology, means going into battle until the last drop of blood. There were two big wars or *puputan* on this island that are still remembered today as acts of heroism. They are the Badung Puputan in September 1906 and the

Klungkung Puputan of April 1908. Both were waged to fight the Dutch colonial government.

More than a century later, the Balinese people are determined to pursue another *puputan*. This time, it will be to fight the investors that want to colonise Benoa Bay in Bali's Kuta Selatan district.

## Strategic area

The 'battlefield' of Benoa is located in southern Bali, covering about 1,988 hectares. It lies within the richest parts of Bali encompassing Denpasar city and Badung Regency. It is also very strategic in terms of the tourism economy and politics, being situated in the middle of the 'golden triangle', the heart of Bali's tourism hub: Sanur in the north, Kuta in the west and Nusa Dua in the south.

Sanur is a pioneer in tourism de-

velopment in Bali. It hosts the first five-star hotel on the island, the Inna Grand Bali Beach, constructed in 1966. To this day it remains a hub for Bali's tourism, especially for tourists who enjoy sunrise scenery.

Kuta, in the west of Benoa Bay, is the heart of tourism. This international village is a magnet for tourists from all over the world. Its spectacular sunsets draw millions of travellers, especially young people, making this area the icon of Bali tourism.

Nusa Dua in the south is the most elite area in Bali. It hosts the hotel complex for conferences and conventions, managed by the Bali Tourism Development Corporation (BTDC). It includes the Bali International Convention Centre, which has hosted many UN meetings on the environment, including the 2007 UN climate change conference.

Linking these three important tourism hubs of Bali is Benoa Bay.

Additionally, Benoa Bay is located between two important public facilities: the Benoa harbour in the north and Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport in the west. These are two of the main entry points into Bali. About 98% of tourists visiting Bali enter through the airport.

Two years ago, Bali's first tolled highway cut across Benoa Bay. The Bali Mandara toll road, 12.7 kilometres long, was inaugurated in September 2013 and connects Denpasar with the Ngurah Rai Airport, the airport with Nusa Dua, and Denpasar with Nusa Dua. It has become a new route for tourists to visit Nusa Dua.

### Eyed by investors

It is no wonder, then, that many investors want to control Benoa Bay. In 1994, PT Bali Benoa Marina (BBM) came up with plans to develop a world-class cruise ship harbour and marina, hotels, resorts, housing and golf course in the area. The location was exactly the site of the currently planned reclamation. A master plan, formulated by design and construction consultant PT Cameron Chisholm Nicol Indonesia, revealed that this plush project would be de-

veloped on four new islands covering 270 hectares, to be reclaimed and built by PT BBM.

Under PT BBM's 1996 master plan, the four islands were given names and designations. Pulau Utama (Main Island), which would also serve as the ship harbour, would be 43.7 hectares, Pulau Bali Village 39.5 hectares, Pulau Lapangan Golf 164 hectares, and Pulau Venice 22 hectares. It was clear that the largest island would house an 18-hole golf course, to be surrounded by hotels, resorts and housing areas. The total investment was to be \$260 million, and the target market was clearly the wealthy.

At about the same time, in the northern part of Benoa Bay, another mega-project was underway: the reclamation of Serangan Island. Originally, Serangan, in the south of Denpasar, was an island separated from Bali. It was a turtle breeding site. PT Bali Turtle Island Development (BTID), owned by two of then president Soeharto's sons, Bambang Trihatmojo dan Tommy Soeharto, and the Military Kodam IX/Udayana, wanted to develop tourism facilities here.

For this purpose, PT BTID then reclaimed 481 hectares of land in Serangan, four times the original size of Serangan Island. The company wanted to develop Serangan as a luxury tourism complex. The facilities planned were, among others, a golf course, resorts, lagoons for water sports, a yacht club, a beach clubhouse and villas. Also in the offing were a turtle research centre, hotels and restaurants.

This was in 1995, and the new island was reclaimed on the southern part of the old island. There is a canal to separate the old island, on which about 2,500 people lived, from the new island, wholly owned by PT BTID.

Although there was opposition from many communities in Bali, including the inhabitants of Serangan itself, the reclamation continued. This was different from the PT BBM project, which did not get off the ground beyond the master plan.

These two ambitious projects

were halted due to the 1997-98 economic and political crisis in Indonesia. PT BBM had not begun construction, and the PT BTID development was only about 60% complete. About 75% of the total land in the reclaimed Serangan island is lying idle.

### New investment plans

Seventeen years later, Benoa Bay remains a target of investors. This time it is PT Tirta Wahana Bahari Internasional (TWBI) which is planning to build high-end tourism facilities in the area.

PT TWBI is a Badung Regency-based company dealing in property development, construction and management services. Its director Hendi Lukman is also the director of business development at PT Jakarta International Hotels and Development Tbk. Established in 1969, this company builds and manages hotels, office buildings, shopping centres, apartments and business centres.

PT Jakarta International is the owner of Hotel Borobudur Jakarta, Discovery Hotel & Resort Management, and PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk. The latter is the developer and manager of the Sudirman Business Centre, or SCBD Sudirman, in South Jakarta.

Henry Sutanto, who sits on the PT TWBI board, is also involved with PT Kharisma Arya Paksi, owner of Hotel Discovery Kartika Plaza and Discovery Shopping Mall in Kuta. The Kartika Plaza owner also has hotels in Jakarta, Riau and other places. The holding company for all these is the Artha Graha Network, owned by tycoon Tomy Winata.

PT TWBI has had plans to develop Benoa Bay since September 2012. It signed a contract to cooperate with the Community Research and Service Agency (LPPM) of the University of Udayana (UNUD), the largest public university in Bali. The cooperation involves joint research between LPPM and PT TWBI for five years beginning in September 2012.

LPPM formed a team to conduct a feasibility study on the Benoa Bay area. Its report states that PT TWBI



will develop various facilities such as green areas, places of worship, a cultural centre, a Disneyland-type recreational park, social and public facilities, housing and accommodation, commercial areas and sports facilities. At one point there was also talk of building a Formula One racetrack. A marina and beachfront houses would also be built which would have direct access to the harbour so private yachts can come. The main sports facility would be a golf course.

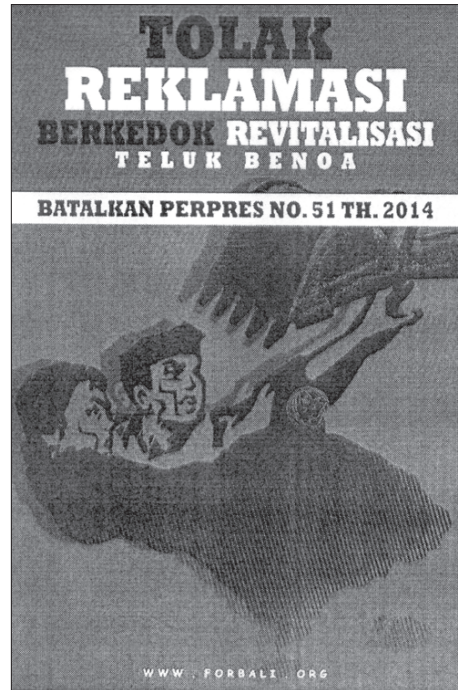
PT TWBI would also conduct reclamation, much like in the unrealised plans of PT BBM and the partially realised reclamation of Serangan Island by PT BTID. According to the LPPM report, the reclamation would use sand from the southern coast of Bali, i.e., the Sawangan beach, and from Sekotong in neighbouring Lombok island.

Masking the whole plan under claims of 'revitalising' Benoa Bay, PT TWBI's Hendi Lukman said that revitalisation will improve the condition of Benoa Bay, which currently suffers from sedimentation that is threatening the remaining mangroves.

PT TWBI's plans are in line with the national policy under the Masterplan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development, known as MP3EI. Under MP3EI, Bali is included in the Bali-Nusa Tenggara corridor, where development would be focused on tourism and food production. Benoa Bay is part of the Investment Focus Zone or Kawasan Perhatian Investasi (KPI), hence the intent to reclaim the bay as per the plans of PT TWBI.

There is a political-economic intent behind the reclamation plan. Firstly, investors want to create and control new lands. Islands would be constructed and these would have value like any other prime land. Bali is a small island where the land holding of investors is limited, so creating new lands would guarantee their future profits. Secondly, the intent is to develop another elite area, where local businesses would not be able to participate, thus creating a monopoly among the big investors.

Many questions have been raised



The poster for a concert organised by the ForBALI protest group against the Benoa Bay reclamation.



on the feasibility of this plan. For instance, where would the water and electricity come from? How would waste be disposed of? Who will actually be recruited as labour? Where would the sand to reclaim the land come from? What would happen to Bali residents who want to conduct sea water cleansing rituals in Benoa Bay as part of their ancestral customs? What is the cultural value of this plan for Bali? Who will be responsible for mitigating the impacts of the new island construction? All these need answers – answers that have not been forthcoming.

### Protests

Once it became known to the public, the PT TWBI plan met with opposition. Community groups, particularly in the southern part of Bali, rejected the plan for several reasons.

For example, while the village of Sidakarya in South Denpasar district is not directly connected to Benoa Bay, two rivers – Tukad Rangda and Tukad Punggawa – that pass through the village flow into the bay. The villagers are concerned that if Benoa Bay is reclaimed, Sidakarya will be flooded during the rainy season.

There is basis for this concern.

Sidakarya is only 2 metres above sea level and located about 2 kilometres from the coast of south Denpasar. This makes the village prone to flooding in the rainy season, and indeed it was badly flooded in 2009. According to villager I Made Suardana, every full moon the water from both rivers cannot flow freely into the sea because of their position which is at the same level. Even without reclamation, the people of Sidakarya have had to deal with sea water inundating their village. 'We are sure that if reclamation takes place, we will be flooded,' Suardana said.

Such fears are confirmed by a modelling exercise conducted by Conservation International (CI) Indonesia. According to the Denpasar-based NGO, Benoa Bay is like a surface runoff reservoir for five river watershed areas surrounding it.

Made Iwanatana, a researcher at CI Indonesia, said that reclamation will directly reduce flood water carrying capacity. 'When it rains during high tide, the surrounding areas would be flooded,' he said. These areas are Sanur Kauh, Suwung Kangin, Pesanggaran, Pemogan, Simpang Dewa Ruci, Bandara Ngurah Rai and Tanjung Benoa.

Based on this, the villagers of

Sidakarya rejected the Benoa Bay reclamation project. They established a group called Jaringan Aksi Tolak Reklamasi Sidakarya (JALAK or Sidakarya Reject Reclamation Network). Similar groups were formed in other areas, such as Tanjung Benoa Tolak Reklamasi (TBTR) and Forum Pemerhati Pembangunan Bali (FPPB) Kedonganan. They have different reasons for protesting, but the most common is fear of flooding.

I Gede Sudiana, the head of FPPB in Kedonganan village, said that reclamation would also threaten the local fisherfolk. At present some 200 Kedonganan villagers are fishing in Benoa Bay in the very location targeted for reclamation. 'If our fishing ground is reclaimed, what would we do to make a living?' asked Sudiana.

Other livelihoods could also be undermined by the new tourism facilities in Benoa Bay. Kedonganan is a centre of seafood restaurants owned by local villagers; one can see a line of restaurants stretching along the west coast, facing the Ngurah Rai Airport. 'If there is a new tourism place, one that is supported by big capital, we will not be able to compete,' Sudiana said.

The mushrooming protests against the reclamation of Benoa Bay are in general initiated and coordinated by young people. One of the expressions of protest is through banners and *baliho* (billboards) placed in the streets. Kadek Tila, a young man who helped in erecting one *baliho* in Sukawati, about 20 kilometres from Benoa Bay, said they protested against the project out of concern that their village will experience erosion.

According to Tila, the villages in the southern part of Gianyar Regency are vulnerable to the impacts of any reclamation of Benoa Bay. Such areas are mainly the Ketewel, Purnama and Lebih beaches. Until the 1990s, the coast was still tilted towards the sea. But after the reclamation of Serangan Island in 1996, these areas experienced erosion. Many buildings were affected, including cafes, the traditional village meeting stalls and even houses. 'If Benoa Bay is really reclaimed, the beaches in our village



A protest against the Benoa Bay reclamation and Presidential Regulation No. 51/2014 which changed the status of Benoa Bay from a conservation to an economic and tourism area.

will be damaged,' said Tila. He said this project will affect not only the villages in the surrounding areas but also other beaches in Bali.

The voices of dissent found a common register at ForBALI. This forum was initiated by activists, university students and musicians, and many village-level youth groups from all the regencies in Bali have also come on board. As of September 2015, about 70 groups have joined ForBALI. 'The voices of dissent are showing that the Benoa Bay reclamation is indeed a problem for all the people of Bali,' said ForBALI coordinator Wayan Gendo Suardana.

Protests have also taken place in Jakarta, in East Java's Banyuwangi Regency (where the people reject plans to mine the sands of Banyuwangi to be sent to Bali for the Benoa Bay reclamation) and even abroad. There are similar plans for reclamation in other coastal areas of Indonesia, and the protest in Bali is seen as important to halt the other projects.

The protests take various forms. ForBALI regularly organises street protests in front of the Bali Governor's office and the Bali Provincial Parliament building. Protests are also given voice through musical concerts, social media, discussions, lobbying and even community prayers in the Hindu way. Thousands of people attend these events, coming from vari-

ous groups such as activists, students, music fans, musicians, housewives, even local entrepreneurs.

Associated with the demands for a halt to the Benoa Bay reclamation plan are calls for the revocation of Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No. 51/2014. This regulation was signed by the then president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. It changed the status of Benoa Bay, which previously was designated as a conservation area, to an economic and tourism area, providing policy support for the reclamation plan. The protests now aim to pressure current president Joko Widodo to revoke this regulation.

### Intimidation and scare tactics

In response to the island-wide rejection of the Benoa Bay reclamation project, intimidation and scare tactics were directed at the protesters in various forms: destruction of *baliho*/banners, intimidation by hoodlums, even arrests. I Kadek Bobby Susila, a young man from Banjar Suwung Kauh in South Denpasar, was among the first to be on the receiving end. He stays at the north of Benoa Bay and, with his friends, have voiced out their rejection of the reclamation plan. They participated in ForBALI and other group protests, and have also erected a *baliho* calling for rejection of the reclamation.



Most of the *baliho* that have been put up bear the message 'Bali Rejects Reclamation. Revoke Perpres No. 51/2014'. Such *baliho* have sprung up in other areas such as Denpasar, Gianyar, Jembrana, Klungkung, even Bangli in Bali's hill region. Often, however, just a few days after the *baliho* appear, they would be torn down, and it is not known by whom. One destruction spree occurred in August 2014; in one night alone many *baliho* were torn down in 11 places in Denpasar.

Hoodlums would also make an appearance at the sites of protests staged by ForBALI or other groups. Kadek Duarsa, a Tanjung Benoa community representative and an activist with TBTR, said that in August 2014, a clash almost erupted between the protesters and these hoodlums. 'I told the police and army officials, let the hoodlums come and watch our protests. But if any one is beaten up or our equipment is damaged, we will make Tanjung Benoa a battlefield fighting them,' he said.

The villagers of Sidakarya have also experienced intimidation and even arrest. Four members of JALAK, I Wayan Saniyasa, I Wayan Adi Jayanatha, I Made Murdana and I Wayan Tirtayasa, were arrested by the police in March 2014. They were accused of threatening the Governor of Bali during a protest.

The arrests were condemned by many community groups at the national and local levels. Groups such as Greenpeace, Kontras and Walhi (a national-level environment and human rights group) wrote letters to the police. Almost a month later, due to pressures from the public, the four were released after their detention was suspended. 'But we will continue to demand revocation of the plan to reclaim Benoa Bay,' said Tirtayasa after his release.

The voices of people such as Tirtayasa, Duarsa and Ketut Merta continue to ring out today, three years after the first protest was launched. 'We will continue to fight until the reclamation plan is stopped,' said Duarsa. ◆

*Anton Muhajir is a freelance journalist based in Bali and has been involved in the environmental and human rights movements. This article was adapted, added on to and translated into English by Hira Jhamtani.*

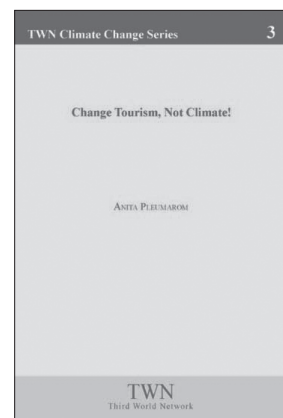
## Change Tourism, Not Climate!

By Anita Pleumarom

TOURISM has been identified as one of the major contributors of global warming, primarily due to the high energy use for transport. If tourism was a country, its current Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions would today rank fifth, after the USA, China, the European Union and Russia. Given the expected international tourism boom in the coming years, the forecasts are even more perturbing.

This book sets out to explain why this untenable situation has emerged, namely the failure of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to explicitly include GHGs generated by tourism in any global reduction targets as well as in the negotiations on the post-2012 reduction targets. It highlights the absence of considerations of equity and justice in tourism and climate change discussions among policymakers and industry leaders and critically assesses the UN World Tourism Organisation and its position on sustainable tourism.

Unless tourism policymakers take drastic action to reverse the dominant 'business-as-usual' attitude within the industry, tourism will become a key force of GHG emissions in the world, undermining the overall progress made to stem global climate change.



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# Tourism, the extractive industry and social conflict in Peru

Mining companies in Peru, facing local opposition to their activities on account of the environmental damage they are causing, have turned to tourism to clean up their image. *Rodrigo Ruiz Rubio* explains this incestuous relationship between two unlikely partners.

EVEN as the economies of the developed world face trying times, the Peruvian economy is experiencing continued expansion; Peru is forecast to lead economic growth in Latin America in 2015. At least 20 more years of economic expansion is predicted,<sup>1</sup> sustained by the demand for natural resources worldwide.

Within this favourable outlook for investment, the mining sector accounts for about 60% of total exports. Adding the oil and fishing sectors into the picture gives an average share of 80% of all exports by companies based in the country, defining the Peruvian economy as a primary export economy.

In this sense, Peru has become an attractive destination for mining investment, given the vast natural resources and favourable conditions for foreign investors. In the decade from 1999 to 2009, the Peruvian economy received \$14.4 billion in investment in the development of mining operations from several of the world's largest mining companies.<sup>2</sup> To draw such investments, there has since the 1990s been a series of political and economic reforms that favour investments in the extractive industry.

First, a process of privatisation of public enterprises was set in motion, which, among other things, involved large job layoffs and led to the virtual disappearance of miners' trade unions. Then progressively until today various labour, tax, administrative and environmental regulations and regimes of land ownership were created and modified.

At present, the outlook remains expectant despite the vagaries of the global economy. The development of

the mining industry in Peru has placed this country among the top producers of precious metals, being the third largest producer of copper, silver, tin and zinc worldwide and the leading gold producer in Latin America.<sup>3</sup> Mining exports have increased nine times in the last 10 years, with China (copper), Switzerland (gold) and the United States (silver) being the major markets.

## Tourism

Tourism has played a significant role in many developing economies like Peru, although the history of this economic activity is much shorter compared to that of other sectors.

In 1946, the Peruvian government created a specialised agency called the National Tourism Corporation, which, over two decades later, was renamed the National Company for Tourism, tasked with establishing and promoting the hotel infrastructure in major cities. In 1969 the COPESCO Plan was drawn up, the first initiative to promote tourism through the preservation of cultural heritage, developing and implementing tourism plans in impoverished areas. One of the first measures taken, financed by the Peruvian state and the Inter-American Development Bank, was to create a pole of tourism development between Cusco with Machu Picchu as its main attraction with Puno and Lake Titicaca as the axis.

In the 1970s the private sector National Chamber of Tourism, which represents all tourist associations in the country, was established. Over the years it has progressively grown in presence and influence over public

policies in the sector.

In 1981 the Vice Ministry of Tourism under the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Integration and Trade Negotiations (MITINCI), which assumed management of the sector, was created. Despite measures to promote tourism applied during that period, the industry stagnated between 1980 and 1990 due to political instability and civil war that ravaged the country.

With the decline of political violence and the defeat of subversive movements, and in the context of structural reforms promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the early 1990s brought with it new expectations for tourism. As in other productive sectors, all state tourism companies, including 25 strategic hotels and the train service to Machu Picchu, were privatised. However, it is only from 2000 that important initiatives which define the current model of tourism development and the gradual increase in tourist arrivals and international investment in the sector came about.

The Commission for the Promotion of Private Investment (COPRI), currently called ProInversión, was empowered to undertake processes of privatisation and concession of state assets, and, through the Special Commission for the Promotion of Investment in Tourism (CEPRI-Tourism), is responsible for identifying, evaluating and promoting tourism projects concessionable to the private sector. This body has identified 45 new projects with the possibility of being transferred to the private sector, almost all of which are related to the country's cultural and natural heritage.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1

| Region    | % of land under mining concession, October 2014 | Number of social conflicts, April 2015 |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Arequipa  | 48.4                                            | 6                                      |
| Cusco     | 23.2                                            | 16                                     |
| Puno      | 20.2                                            | 17                                     |
| Cajamarca | 40                                              | 14                                     |
| Ancash    | 58.9                                            | 21                                     |

Source: Coperacción – The Office of the Public Defender of Peru

CEPRI-Tourism started out by trying to push through two projects in parallel: the Northern Beaches Hotel Complex and the provision of infrastructure for tourism services in the archaeological complex of Kuelap. In the first case, the project required the imposition of restrictions on the use of the land and sea by hundreds of farmers and fishermen, and called for the state to make up the amount paid by the investor for the concession or privatisation through public works to benefit the project. Both this and the Kuelap project triggered social mobilisation by the local population who organised to prevent violation of their rights.

In 2008 a national law for the development of tourism services in cultural heritage areas was enacted. The aim was to target investments that can meet a minimum four-star hotel classification. The regulation opened up the possibility for investors to enjoy a monopoly on providing services in the country's historical heritage areas, with possible effects on the management and conservation of the sites in light of an inefficient and weak state in matters of heritage protection and control over the operations of private capital.<sup>5</sup> This law was rejected by the population of Cusco and a massive protest led to minor modifications to the standard along with a claim of unconstitutionality. The claim was eventually rejected by the Constitutional Court and the law remains in force.

Conditions have become quite conducive for the development of tourism in Peru, which is attracting growing investment and tourists to its diverse cultural and natural heritage sites as well as for its increasingly renowned cuisine. For example, Machu Picchu, the country's major tourist landmark, has been considered by many specialised publications as the best tourist destination in the world for several consecutive years. The World Travel Awards also deemed Peru as the world's best culinary destination in 2014 and various Peruvian restaurants have been ranked among the best in the globe.

### Bringing together mining and tourism for sustainable development?

The Peruvian territory is considered one of the six cradles of civilisation, and cultural development has taken place over more than 5,000 years. Throughout the territory there are important vestiges of the different cultures that existed in the coastal, mountain and jungle regions, which define the current cultural diversity. In terms of natural heritage, Peru is one of the world's 'megadiverse' countries, with 84 of the 117 life zones and 28 of the 32 climates on the planet.<sup>6</sup> The Andes mountain range and the Amazon, the river which is the largest in the world and which gives its name to the Amazon rainforest, pass through Peruvian territory.

From the perspective of tourism, this spectacular cultural and natural environment has great potential to be promoted, and many attractions are already being exploited. Tourist arrivals numbered more than 3 million in 2014 and \$2.5 billion in investment in hotels is projected in the coming years.

Meanwhile the mining potential is scattered throughout the country, mainly on the coast and in the mountains, over a total area that makes up 20.4% of national territory, encompassing different ecosystems, regions and rural and urban areas.<sup>7</sup>

In the specific case of indigenous and peasant communities, these occupy about 27% of the country. Family farming is the main economic activity that contributes 70% of national food security,<sup>8</sup> and collective land management continues to be quite widely practised. It is largely these indigenous and peasant lands, or their adjacent areas, which possess tourism and mining potential, and which in many cases are also home to the country's poorest communities.

The government's main development strategy in these regions is to promote large mining investments, resulting in mining concessions in 45% of the communal territory,<sup>9</sup> which is generating growing social conflicts nationwide.

This juxtaposition of territories and activities has sparked much debate and conflict, and defines the economic and political landscape. According to the Office of the Public Defender of Peru, a government agency which tracks social conflicts, from March 2015 there have been 141 environmental conflicts, 94 of which were related to the mining sector, followed by the hydrocarbon sector with 22 conflicts. Such a scenario can trigger serious situations of confrontation involving the state, populations and businesses.

This state of affairs becomes clear if we look at the situation in the two most important tourist circuits in the country: the southern circuit, which includes the regions of Arequipa, Cusco and Puno; and the northern circuit, which brings together the regions

of Ancash, La Libertad, Lambayeque, Cajamarca and Amazonas (Table 1).

As an indicator of the extent of conflict, from 2006 to May 2015 there were 258 dead and 2,247 injured,<sup>10</sup> most of them after repression by the authorities against strikes and protests called on environmental grounds. Added to that, in the mining sector there have been 8,618 cases involving serious environmental liabilities<sup>11</sup> damaging the health and natural resources of hundreds of rural communities, according to official reports.

According to the Office of the Public Defender, the main causes behind communities' rejection of the presence of mining investments are:<sup>12</sup>

- environmental problems, the feeling of uncertainty and fear of contamination
- social problems: exclusion, inequality and discrimination
- violation of human rights
- the partiality of state enterprises: management problems that are sources of public distrust towards the state
- negative environmental externalities and their impact on different extractive economic activities
- negative performance of companies in the environmental conflicts.

On occasion, support can be seen for the presence of mining investments, motivated by the prospect of immediate direct benefit. Such is the case with La Oroya, which is considered the fifth most polluted city in the world, a situation brought about by the presence of a US mining company called Doe Run.<sup>13</sup> Despite this terrible situation that seriously affects the health of the population, there are those who come to protest to protect their jobs and defend the interests of the company so that it can continue to operate without meeting environmental standards set by the government. This demonstrates the precarious socioeconomic position of a population that is prepared to prioritise jobs over health.

It is quite common in such situations to put forward, as an alternative to mining expansion, other economic activities that are seen as having much less negative impact and are consid-

ered as truly sustainable. In this perspective, tourism is repeatedly proposed as an alternative to extractive mining activities.

Taking advantage of this positive view of tourism, the mining companies have in recent years been financing several studies and tourism projects in their areas of operation. In 2005 the president of the National Society of Mining, Petroleum and Energy (SNMPE) stated: 'The tourism sector and the mining sector have obvious similarities, they are very dynamic sectors, decentralised and main foreign exchange earners. The mining [sector] ... now stands to support the development of tourism.'

The statement was made in the context of the signing of an agreement between SNMPE and the Peruvian Export and Tourism Promotion Board (Promperu) seeking cooperation in four areas: raising awareness about good treatment and tourist services; working on infrastructure projects; allowing the derivation of the surplus generated by mining activity, that is, identifying tourism development projects that will involve regional and local governments and access mechanisms generated by the mining industry; and developing tax exemptions for tourism projects.

The SNMPE-Promperu agreement aims to present the mining sector as one of the main drivers of the tourism sector. This clever proposal is designed to leverage on recommendations for impoverished rural populations to develop tourism as an activity that would help raise their living standards. From this perspective, this need for tourism development would be met by the mining corporations. The companies can then improve their image among the local populations and reduce opposition to their presence in the community or adjacent territories. They would thus be able to minimise losses due to strikes and protests, and, on top of that, enjoy tax exemptions in return for investments in the tourism sector.

Many mining companies that are the source of serious environmental conflicts and corruption and that promote repressive policies are undertak-

ing programmes and investments for local tourism development. This policy is implemented through foundations or associations created by the mining companies under their corporate social responsibility programmes that channel private funds for the development of tourism projects in their areas of operation.

## Final thoughts

'We are a democratic society where the rule of law prevails and in which all people have a high quality of life and equal opportunities to develop their full potential as human beings ... Poverty and extreme poverty have been eradicated, redistributive mechanisms exist to achieve social equity, and natural resources are used sustainably, maintaining good environmental quality.'<sup>14</sup>

The above quotation is from the national vision in the 'Strategic National Development Plan by 2021' document that must guide the various public policies emanating from the central government. In the case of sectoral policy formulated by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, one of its four objectives is to 'promote the preservation and conservation of the environment by companies in the energy and mining sector in the development of different sectoral activities fostering social inclusion and the harmonious relations of companies in the energy and mining sector and civil society'. With regard to tourism, the guiding document is the National Tourism Strategic Plan 2008-2018, which holds as its mission 'organise, promote and guide the sustainable and competitive development of tourism in Peru by integrators, concerted and decentralised processes, promoting economic and social development, creating decent jobs that improve the quality of life of the population and ensuring the assessment and conservation of historical, natural and cultural heritage'.

The various quotes above evoke altruistic, democratic, redistributive and even ecological principles within the overall vision of sustainable development that should inform sectoral



policies which define the conditions and development of productive activities in the country. If we were to undertake a concrete analysis of the current Peruvian reality, however, we will see a clear contradiction between the rhetoric and practice of public policy. But from the perspective of the central government and the private sector, there would be no inconsistency between discourse and practice, and between productive activities that at first glance appear incompatible, as the discursive mantle of 'sustainable development' and appeal to technological advances would make coexistence possible. In this respect, 'sustainable' tourism is conceived and developed as any other economic activity within the capitalist development model where genuine environmental and social sustainability considerations are subordinate to the supreme goal of economic growth.

From that perspective, tourism is not contradictory to activities that have a strong environmental impact, are environmentally destructive and upset the socioeconomic dynamics and local culture. In the case of environmental conflicts and violations of human rights, the conflict is seen as an opportunity to encourage mining companies to finance tourism as a strategy of containment against local social rejection.

In this case, as in many others, we see that tourism practices do not necessarily contribute positively to the natural and social environments in which they take place. Unfortunately in the Peruvian context, the practices in the tourism sector can contribute instead to strengthening public policies that run contrary to real sustainable development and respect for human rights. ♦

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- 3 In 2010 Peru exported 150 tons of gold illegally, which, added to the 180 tons produced legally, makes the country the second largest gold producer in the world. Much of this illegal gold is bought by companies linked to the London Bullion Market Association, the guild securing the international price of gold. See: <http://ojo-publico.com/oro-sucio-la-pista-detras-del-london-bullion-market/>
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# Tourism and the consumption of Goa

*Claude Alvares* has seen all the major tourism changes that Goa in India has gone through over the past 40 years and believes each has been worse than its predecessor, each taking Goa further away from itself.

I CAME to Goa in 1977, after having lived half of my then life in the industrialised city of Mumbai. At that time Goa – 600 km below Mumbai on the west coast of India – was not a place that could be located on any tourist map and neither did it provide any reason for generating the fantasies and excitement it has now come to engender in people who develop a yen to visit.

The first thing that struck me about Goa at that time was that it appeared to be actually a work of art, a painting. When you look at a good painting, you can tell from it something of the quality of the painter. When you visit art exhibitions, you may in fact rarely encounter the painter herself. But you can deduce from the artwork itself whether the painter is technically good, whether she is obsessed with animals or nature, whether she is a depressive or a joyous personality, and so on. From the painting you try and figure out what was it in the mind or soul of that person that could produce this painting that communicated to you joy or pleasure or even anxiety.

One thing that has happened over the last 25 years is the arrival of these thousands of people who have descended on Goa (the bulk of them Indians), simply because they all wanted to see this painting called Goa – a unique and remarkable place that doesn't exist anywhere else on the earth. And this extraordinary area of enchantment did not encompass just the plants, the mountains, the streams, the endless beaches and so on. It included the people, those responsible for the painting: those who had carved out the paddy fields, raised the lovely



**Dumped waste and sewage behind hotels at Colva Creek, Goa. 'After the tourism excesses of some three decades, some parts of Goa already look ravaged, torn, tattered and dismantled.'**

homes, maintained the orchards and coconut palms. The people are a fundamental part of this place. You can't separate Goan ecology from Goans. They are the ones who are responsible for creating, nurturing and protecting it. If you want to try and figure out how indeed they created this work of art, it takes a great deal of effort and a great deal of study, a quality or dispensation that tourists distinctly lack. Therefore, most do not care.

Paintings are displayed for people to see or enjoy, but nobody knows of anyone who has enjoyed a painting by wrecking it through their collective actions. But after the tourism excesses of some three decades, some parts of Goa already look ravaged, torn, tattered and dismantled. If those areas are shown in the fancy tourism brochures, few tourists will come call-

ing. An area that looked after a modest population of less than one million inhabitants is now being called upon to service seven million. No wonder the ugliness is showing, even if you do not wish to look. Some parts of Goa now compete with the slums of Mumbai or, worse, its concrete jungles. The garbage, the litter, appears to have been spread by a cyclone: it is everywhere. Untreated sewage has contaminated the groundwater. The Campal Creek in the capital city of Panaji reeks of untreated sewage. The Sal River is equally black with sewage.

Goan culture is a fish-curry-and-rice phenomenon. Fish, curry and rice are the principal elements of the staple diet. They also manifest the overt face of the ecosystem: the coconut tree for the curries; the paddy fields for the rice; and the fish harvested from the adjoining ocean. We see these elements now being progressively stressed and dismantled. The fish is now severely priced because of obvious scarcity in sharing the same commodity between seven million in place of one. So those who have the ability to pay get the best fish laid out on the table. The ecological assets hitherto used for living in perpetuity – the paddy fields, the coconut groves – have been replaced by concrete structures that will not be able to sustain themselves over a single generation but for the moment are happy breeding grounds for speculators. The real estate developers – who always follow closely on the heels of the tourism developers – offer those who are enchanted with Goa a permanent piece of the Goan cake even though they know that every piece of con-

Tourism Concern

crete means that much less vegetation. Thus large areas in small Goan coastal villages, once picture-perfect settings, have been rapidly colonised by hordes of resorts or mega-housing projects.

Over the years, control of the tourism trade itself has passed over from local people and communities – responsible for creating the naturally splendid-looking environment – to those who come routinely to invade, conquer and occupy for business or profit. The Goa Marriott and the Grand Hyatt now jockey for tourists side by side with the hotels of the Taj Group, owned and managed by the Tata clan. Like Palestine, Goa has begun to look like ‘occupied territory’. The starkest demonstration of this status is the recent attempt to enforce the installation of a golf course which proposes to claim the lands of an entire village, leaving the original Goan inhabitants place only for their homes and their graveyard.

Occupiers take, they rarely give or contribute. I have seen over the past 40 years not a single initiative from the new *conquistadores* to ensure that nature is not phenomenally damaged or polluted from their activity. Though the natural and cultivated beauty of Goa was the source for the almost tropic dash to its shores, once here, those who come to occupy are unable to resist replacing what they find with their own fantasies – which have nothing of what the original dwellers created, keeping the ends of ecology in view. The ultimate thrust of destination tourism is to make the destination a replica of home, with mindless coca-colonisation by the same flamboyant chains selling the same merchandise you see whichever part of the world you go. Industrial culture recognises only itself. It brooks no competitors.

So Goa disappears, bit by big bit. Goan fish curry and rice are now found on menus from Penang to San Francisco, because everyone has been to Goa. However, restaurants in Goa now offer a menu that is bewilderingly unGoan. Menus cater to what people want, not what the local people can offer or eat.

And with those vital changes, there has been a deluge of offers to satiate other desires: sex, child sex and liberal quantities of alcohol. The fantasy that Goa represents is a complete freedom from inhibition. Almost overnight, a dozen gambling ships or casinos have crept into the capital’s major river. They invite gamblers from across India, but ruin equally effectively the permanent assets and savings of small traders and merchants, wrecking their families as well. Everything is money even if everything leads to destitution.

Nobody who knows Goa from the past 40 years would not weep at seeing what it was once and what it is today. It was never like this.

The outward image of this smallest of states in the Indian Union is mostly taken from the coastal beaches which attracted the original Portuguese adventurers led by Afonso de Albuquerque as early as 1510. Remnants of old forts still dot the landscape after that first discovery.

But the second discovery of Goa was left to the hippy generation of the late 1960s. The flower children were part of a younger era that was disillusioned with lifestyles – including military duty in Vietnam – in the West. They would often be found living simple, almost naturalistic lives, with low carbon footprints, often outside the pale of the Goan village. From that time till the present in fact, foreigners are still sometimes referred to as ‘hippies’ even if the hordes of foreign tourists today have nothing in common with the benign flower children of yesteryear.

So Goa has had an easy relationship with foreigners. The flower children found the local population not just tolerant but hospitable. (Can we forget that the Taino and the Arawak were hospitable to Christopher Columbus who therefore easily enslaved them?) The important aspect of ‘hippy tourism’ is that the local Goan economy received some stimulus directly from their arrival, since there were no hotels and the flower children could not afford them in any case and preferred either small shacks or staying with local villagers. That

model of tourism – like the rice paddies – could have continued forever without damage to either environment or culture. The last thing the flower children wanted was to change things or get them ‘modernised’, since they were themselves rejecting the Western style of economy and consumption or fleeing from it, so there was no question of imposing changes.

This changed forever in the mid-1980s once the big actors – the tour operators – came to know. Always on the lookout for newer and cheaper places to prey on for their entertainment and adventure menus – after the existing ones quickly became jaded or overcrowded – they saw Goa as the innocent, unspoiled new star on their firmament, ready for mass consumption and sale.

The German charters operated by Condor discovered Goa first and the pattern of tourists arriving in droves – mass, destination tourism – became entrenched rapidly thereafter. Following the first invasion of 1987, it has been a picture of continuous gangrape thereafter. First the Germans, then the English, then the Israelis, then the Russians. Goa has seen what is called ‘consuming the earth’-type tourism – people interested only in an exotic destination, with little concern for the fate or concerns of local populations; in fact, the more isolated from the latter, the better the comfort levels. The fate of any locale selected as an international tourism destination is that it will be wholly transformed and consumed, till only the rind is left, for discarding. Little of itself will survive the ordeal of the hurricane.

It has taken just three decades to move from the original low-footprint tourism represented by the hippies to Goa’s present-day ‘full-blown’ destination tourism status, with local people and foreigners now enthusiastically collaborating to dismantle ecological assets, unmindful and uncaring of problems their loud activities inflict on people unconnected with tourism, and with a political leadership incapable of responding to the rapidly changing thrust and demands imposed by an increasingly mean and apathetic trade, anxious only to cut



corners and remain competitive.

For those Goans dependent on it, mass tourism itself has now become a new subsistence economy: one year a bomb scare cancels reservations; another year, a Russian tour operator collapses. Peace of mind has been replaced by continuous anxiety. With a monsoon restriction of four months every year, the period for exploiting tourists is reserved for the balance eight. From being once a hospitable people, those dependent on tourism now compete in exploiting those they wish to serve.

Of course, all this development was not without resistance. The takeover of Goa for tourism of this invasive category was denounced from the start. In 1987, the first German charters were met at the airport by a hostile group of local social activists armed with cowdung and rotten eggs. The gradual imposition of the new industry on the local population led to a movement for responsible tourism – which failed. It was a campaign run by NGOs stricken by the disclosures of Pattaya in Thailand or child sex tourism in the Philippines. To circumscribe the environmental destruction of Goa for entertaining the tourists, groups and networks emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, Equations in India and Tourism Concern in the UK) which did considerable, committed work in raising protests and alarms. They expanded public consciousness of the negative impacts of mass tourism and even led to the creation of the idea of alternative tourism. Their main concern was predator tourism, which is the most offensive face of this industry.

Even today, the installation of fresh tourism infrastructure continues to stoke rebellion. The golf course proposed at Tiracol village is facing resistance full blast. So are the new marinas proposed in the middle of Goa's splendid rivers. The casinos face continuous anger, on streets and in the local parliament. Mega-housing projects and new five-star resorts proposed in relatively intact and cohesive villages like Carmona and

Cavelossim have been stalled by adroit legal and mass protests, leading to huge losses for their proponents.

But the resistance faces a huge wall of inevitability. Predator tourism has a constant and perennial source of fuel: it originates in the ruins of the soul left after human beings are consumed by the arrangements laid down in societies that call themselves 'industrialised'. In this theory, the origins of mass tourism lie in the system of mass production to which human beings in industrial societies must submit themselves. The soulless conditions of work create individuals who need entertainment and release from the violent manner in which they must work and organise their lives.

Tourism is a safety pressure valve for those trapped in demeaning industrial jobs which most people abhor. The secret of its relentless expansion is to be found here. Those who find themselves trapped in industrial jobs must find release far away from their miserable workplaces or go insane. They are willing to submit to industrial discipline provided they get their annual three weeks of full release. It is no wonder that the biggest tourist hordes across Asia and Africa come from industrial shores. Normal people living meaningful lives in these continents find no need for this kind of tourism or, for that matter, for tourism at all.

For these reasons, the tourism industry has never had a serious challenger, not even climate change. Like automobile manufacturers – who couldn't care less if the roads are crammed with expensive cars all moving at snail's pace and burning down the atmosphere provided they sell more cars – the tourism industry knows there are people who need relaxation and escape from the hellhole which industrial society has become. They are flies on human dungheaps, camouflaged as glamour and entertainment. They will disappear only when the dungheap ceases and people become wholesome and human again.

Today we admit we have lost the ability to create paradises – like Goa

– on earth and have replaced it instead with the capacity to create hell out of available paradises. We cannot produce any more the genre of paintings that places like Goa represent. All that we are clever at is the preparation of obituaries. What we can do today with all our science and technology and all our study and academic research is to investigate and analyse how effectively we are destroying these complexities.

In fact, our speciality today is this growing ability to describe destruction. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report of the United Nations, for example, brought together over 1,300 scientists to report on how 60% of the earth's ecosystems – providing essential ecosystem services like clean water and air – were in irreversible decline. We have repeated those studies of destruction with an even grander study on climate change or similar stories on the impending collapse of world fisheries.

But tourism was always considered – when compared with industrial pollution – somewhat less destructive in that sense, softer in its consequences on the natural environment. Many people who have donned the mantle of a tourist at some point of time in their lives would in fact be troubled if they were told they were also part of the dismantling of nature and societies in locations that have no direct connection with the strong hand of industrial civilisation. But it is maybe time for the naivete to end.

The conclusion is inevitable: tourism of the kind that has taken charge in Goa destroys people and nature as effectively as does the industrial civilisation which gave rise to it, as symptom, in the first place. It is the landmark quality of industrial civilisation pushed by capital that it can effectively transform hospitable people into inhospitable caricatures of themselves, or discard totally the value of nature by drowning it in concrete. And yet claim that human beings are better off in the process. ♦

*Claude Alvares is Director of the Goa Foundation, an environmental monitoring group based in Goa. The Foundation has been monitoring the environmental impacts of tourism over decades.*

# The occidentalisation of the Everest

Nepal is a popular destination for 'adventure tourists', not least because of Mount Everest. In making the observation that a movie mimics life, *Vaishna Roy*, in this critique of the Hollywood movie *Everest*, laments that the magnificence that is the Everest has long been turned into an arena 'where dollars can create a messy hash of Disneyfied tourism, jingoism and machismo'.

THERE is a prophetic moment early in the movie *Everest*, when a long line of climbers is waiting to cross a gorge using a rope bridge during an acclimatisation exercise. Texan climber Beck Weathers finally gets his turn, and he is midway on the terrifyingly flimsy rope contraption when a strong gale loosens a cache of snow that almost knocks him off into the abyss below. Expedition leader Rob Hall climbs across to help him and asks if he is okay. Beck turns around and snaps that he didn't pay \$65,000 to stand in queue; he could have had that back home at Wal-Mart.

In many ways, that moment underlines the movie. Because *Everest* somehow never manages to make you hold your breath in awe for the feats of bravery undertaken. Instead, it just fills you with scorn for the foolhardiness of the climbers and the rampant commercialism of what should ideally be only a high-endurance sport, or left well alone. That moment encapsulates the sort of throwaway bravado that climbing the Everest has been reduced to.

*Everest* is, of course, the classic Hollywood adventure movie, where you are invited to admire a band of courageous men and women who brave all odds to overcome an impossible challenge, in this case, the world's highest peak. But I think it's time for even Hollywood to invest a little more subtlety into its efforts. Yes, we all know that it is the ultimate propaganda tool of the civilised West, and the most brilliant move in cultural colonialism since the British launched English-medium schools in far-flung colonies. But one still hopes, some-



**Tourists taking a breather on their way up the Everest. Climbing the mountain has been reduced to 'a quick-fix adventure high that you can buy and make comfortable by paying lots of money'.**

what naively I suppose, for a modicum of nuance.

So, you have these bunches of adrenaline-high, overwhelmingly white, rock-star climbers thronging the foothills of the Everest to tick off another 'been there, done that' box on their impressive bucket lists. The atmosphere at the base camp is annoyingly like a Goa beach, with hordes of climbers lounging about on deck chairs, asking stupid questions like 'Do you speak English?' to the Sherpas, swigging liquor, dancing to lounge music and worrying about espresso coffee. In fact, that is exactly what it is – climbing reduced to tourism, where you pay \$65,000 a pop to grab Facebook bragging rights about how you made it to the top of the world.

But here's the thing. Remember those reality shows on Discovery Channel called 'Survival' or 'Stranded' or 'Marooned' or some-

thing similar? There's always one solitary man on a tropical island trying to make it out alive, surviving on grubs and hacking at the undergrowth with a machete. Then, at a tense moment when he is millimetres away from being stung by a vicious scorpion, it strikes you that he is not exactly that alone, is he? There is a sophisticated TV crew just yards away with bacon sandwiches and a thermos of coffee.

In just such an awkward moment in the film, there are these intrepid climbers gasping and struggling up a steep and icy slope, hooking their carabiners with numb fingers to the fixed ropes that snake up the mountainside, when you have a eureka moment. Who fixed those fixed ropes anyway? And you realise that a whole team of Sherpas has already climbed up ahead, not only fixing the ropes that will be the lifeline for the adventure climbers but carrying all



**A tourist camp at the base of Mt Everest. Rampant commercialisation has coloured how and why the mountain is climbed.**

their supplies as well and laying out extra oxygen cylinders at all the crucial nodes.

If it was difficult before, it becomes impossible after this to take the climbers as seriously as they take themselves. If we must make a movie about the fortitude and courage it takes a human being to climb the Everest, it is laughable that we make the Sherpas invisible. Is courage only white in colour?

Yes, the film has Sherpas, but their characterisation is extraordinarily patronising. One is given a line where he gets to show off (of all useless skills on a climbing expedition) his fluent English. Two others are shown sulking and quarrelling as the *bwana* kindly explains why everyone must work together to survive. They next make an appearance when the brave mountaineers need to be rescued from the impossibly dangerous situation into which their stupidity has landed them.

In the campsites, across the dinner table, there's a whole bunch of clichéd stuff about how they are climbing the mountain because it is there, how it's about attitude and not altitude, about how they climb so that their children know what they are made of and so forth. What we don't get to see are the Sherpas reaching way ahead of each group, pitching the

dining tents, the toilet tents and first-aid tents, setting up the chairs and tables and dishing out hot soup at 18,000 feet.

Sure, they do it for money. But if that makes them any less courageous, then why laud the courage of a Rob Hall, whose outfit 'Adventure Consultants' is the one that charges clients \$65,000 a climb? Why make a hero of a Scott Fischer, who heads adventure travel group 'Mountain Madness', and whose endless bravado not only grates on the nerves but ultimately kills him on the peak?

### True story

*Everest* is based on the true story of the disastrous 1996 expedition when eight climbers lost their lives not just due to the fierce blizzard that struck the peak but also due to some rash decisions taken by expedition leaders and the sheer crowding on the peak. That year, there were several commercial operators on the Everest and around 40 people were attempting the summit.

At Hillary Step, the final leg, a queue waited to hook up to the single fixed line. This meant that when 2 p.m. arrived, the last safe hour at which the climbers absolutely had to begin their descent, most climbers had not even reached the top. Instead of

immediately returning to Camp IV, Rob Hall decided to help the older and inexperienced Doug Hansen begin the last ascent well after 2 p.m. Doug made the peak but both of them died in the descent, caught squarely in the blizzard. When somebody has paid all his life savings to make this trip, it becomes difficult to insist that he turn back when the summit is in sight. It's this commercialisation that has coloured how and why the mountain is climbed.

To talk of logjams and bottle-necks on the Everest appears like an absurdity but that's just what climbing it has been reduced to: a quick-fix adventure high that you can buy and make comfortable by paying lots of money. Tour operators offer one 'personal Sherpa' per climber and fresh meats and fruits flown in by choppers. They promise 'nutritious Western menus', 'imported snacks' and 'propane barbeque grills and ovens' for baked treats. There is even a cocktail hour with appetisers! One website talks of a 'carpeted, heated and solar-lit toilet and shower tent'. From muffins and crêpes with Nutella to heated toilets and chip-and-dip with your Martini, the occidentalisation of the Everest is complete. Now, keeping up with the Joneses is not just about getting the bigger Merc, it's also about getting more selfies on the world's most dangerous spots.

If there's one thing missing in the movie, and in climbers today, it is respect – for the magnificence that is the Everest. When the climbers reach the peak, the first thing they do is plant a puny little flag of their country in the snow. Really? You are on top of the world and all you can think of is stupid geographical boundaries and national pride?

But the movie, after all, is just mimicking real life. The world's most astonishing natural phenomena have long been turned into arenas where dollars can create a messy hash of Disneyfied tourism, jingoism and machismo. ♦

*Vaishna Roy is Associate Editor of The Hindu daily in India, and edits the paper's Sunday Magazine. This article is reproduced from The Hindu's thREAD blog ([www.thehindu.com/thread](http://www.thehindu.com/thread)).*



# The ghettoisation of Palestine – tourism as a tool of oppression and resistance

While Israel has employed the most draconian measures to isolate and control Palestine and the Palestinians, there has been considerable creative resistance.

Tourism in this context has become a means for connecting Palestinians to the external world and fostering solidarity. *Freya Higgins-Desbiolles* explains.

## Freeing Palestine through travel and tourism

*'The 21st Century is witnessing the most blatant ghettoisation of a people since the Second World War' – Australians for Justice in Palestine*

THERE is no place like Palestine; a place of unique spiritual significance to some of the world's major religions, a place subject to settler-colonialism in an era in which such actions are antiquated, a place subject to severe oppression and seemingly beyond the provisions of international law and human rights as its oppressor acts with impunity. Such a situation sees travel and tourism used as political tools in a singular fashion, which could inform us not only about the specifics of this conflict situation, but also potentially about the role of tourism in the world we are creating.

Because of the decades of conflict and occupation, the Palestinian people have been under a complex and ever-changing regime of restricted movement which is quite unprecedented for a nation of people. While in the past, Israel's economy depended on cheap labour from Palestine and so movement was easier, it was the two intifadas that saw free movement extremely restricted. Israel's military used the issuance of permits to travel into Israel allegedly as a means to prevent terrorism and violence. In 2011 about 60,000 permits were issued; a token amount for a population of 2.5 million people.

As Ghassan Hage has pointed out, lying behind Israeli actions was

a struggle by Israel 'to consolidate a "normal peaceful life" inside a colonial settler state...' built on the permanent dispossession of Palestinian people (for greater detail on the background to Israeli restrictions, see B'Tselem). In fact, it was the failure of the Oslo Process from 1993 and the failure to secure a viable Palestinian state which generated the hopelessness, humiliation and desperation that sparked the violence of the intifadas.

In 2006, Gaza was placed under an Israeli blockade because of the democratic election of Hamas (Europe and the US suspended aid, designating Hamas a terrorist organisation). While Hamas were labelled terrorists, a key factor was that this party was likely to prove less compliant or corruptible than the Fatah party, which was left to dominate the Palestinian National Authority governing the West Bank. This blockade has reinforced the cantonisation of Palestine and undermined hopes for a unified state despite international law declaring such actions illegal.

This is the context of the unprecedented restrictions on mobility which are the focus here.

This restriction of movement is carried out through physical structures, including permanent structures such as the well-known 'Apartheid Wall' (see box next page), numerous gates, trenches, checkpoints, guard towers, earthworks and bypass roads, but also temporary and unpredictable barriers through things like 'flying checkpoints'. These are supported by a complex system of permits admin-

istered by the Israeli military, which issues far too few passes for the number of Palestinians who need to travel to other places for work, education, medical care, to visit family or conduct religious pilgrimage, for instance. Some sites of Palestine are becoming almost completely cut off, including Jerusalem and Gaza.

Acknowledging that analysts such as Jeff Halper, with his articulation of Israel's 'matrix of control', and Sari Hanafi, with his concept of the 'politics of spacio-cide', have offered insightful discussions of these developments, what this article offers is an analysis of the role that tourism and travel plays in this systemic oppression, with an opportunity for gathering new insights into the situation.

The issue of the mobility of Palestinians has multiple angles, including the ability of Palestinians to travel within Palestine (under Occupation or into the territories of 1948) and travel on return journeys outwardly from Palestine, and non-Palestinians travelling to Palestine.

## The impediments to travel imposed on Palestinians

Since the Occupation imposed from 1967, Palestinians have found it increasingly difficult and sometimes impossible to travel within Palestine and conduct return journeys out from Palestine. Understanding curbs to travel gets more complicated with the necessity to then adapt considerations of Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, Palestinians liv-

ing as citizens of Israel, Palestinians living stateless in refugee camps in the region and Palestinians living in diaspora throughout the world.

The restriction on movements of Palestinians is part of Israel's closure policy and sees such things as inability to travel within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Gaza, to East Jerusalem and into Israel, exit from any point of Palestine, or travel efficiently on public roads or transport systems. Arbitrary impositions include the need for a permit which can be very difficult to obtain, particularly for men of a certain age and with any record of imprisonment (when a majority of men have served time as political prisoners at some point during the Occupation).

In addition to the inconvenience of these obstacles to travel, there are considerable time and economic costs that have damaged the emerging Palestinian economy. For instance, many Palestinians are forced to use the Allenby Bridge to exit through Jordan for international business travel, which extends the length and costs of travel, if indeed travel is permitted.

The Gazan economy has been crippled by the closure of the borders under an Israeli blockade, seeing agricultural produce on which the economy depends rot at the checkpoints. Less tangible but no less negative is the racism underpinning these initiatives which degrades Palestinian lives, such as the highway networks of 'Jews-only' roads that are developed to connect the settlement outposts while isolating and preventing Palestinian movement between places previously very accessible and near.

The impacts of these arbitrary, discriminatory and oppressive restrictions prevent the Palestinians from enjoying the multiple benefits of mobility and tourism. This includes blocking Palestinians from accessing higher education opportunities overseas, which is most pronounced with the blockade of Gaza. As Amnesty International has noted: 'If a student wants to study for a degree that isn't offered in Gaza, or the programmes in Gaza don't meet the individual's needs, the student is expected to over-

## The 'Apartheid Wall'

THE 'Apartheid Wall' describes a separation barrier built by Israel allegedly to protect itself from attacks originating in the West Bank. It is particularly controversial because, in places, it goes inside the 1949 Armistice Line (or 'Green Line') and therefore expropriates Palestinian land. It also separates Palestinians from their schools, their fields, their relatives and from each other, and, together with limited crossings with limited opening hours, arguably localises people affected in a way that is more suited to the dark ages. On completion, it will be approximately 700 kilometres in length. Amongst the other impacts of the impediments to movement the Wall causes, it undermines possibilities to harness tourism for Palestinian benefit as it cuts off major tourist drawcards such as the holy site of Rachel's Tomb from Palestinian control.

More significantly, such actions work to negate feelings of autonomy

and well-being for Palestinians. Writing inscribed on the wall entitled 'The Wall is on my heart' expressed this: 'After the Wall around Rachel's Tomb was built, I felt terrible. Nobody was walking here, only the cats and dogs. The wall creates a feeling ... the feeling that it surrounds you; that you are not permitted to move. Every time, every day you see the Wall. When I look outside through the window to see the sunrise or the sunset the Wall is in front of me. When I go to the Wall I feel that something closes in my heart, as if the Wall is on my heart ... When I see the Wall I also feel ashamed of myself, because it is created by human beings. – Melvina, Bethlehem'

The International Court of Justice made a ruling in 2004 that the 'construction by Israel of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its associated regime are contrary to international law'; and yet it continues to be built largely unimpeded.

come a variety of obstacles to travel abroad or forgo academic aspirations altogether.'

Additionally, checkpoints, border restrictions and policies work to undermine an emerging Palestinian tourism sector. For instance, the manager of the Jericho Resort gave a testimonial to the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem in 2011 attesting to how the resort has been crippled as checkpoints and barriers have hampered domestic travel, diaspora travel and international travel with the inclusion of Jericho, a significant tourism location, into Area A (areas in the West Bank under full Palestinian control) from 2000.

At a more personal level, Raja Shehadeh's book *Palestinian Walks* evokes his anguish, as an avid walker of the Palestinian landscape, at the increasing barriers to unrestricted trekking; but even more than that, he records 'a vanishing landscape' under Israeli occupation and settlements. Another example concerns the ability of Palestinians of all categories to

undertake 'visiting friends and relatives' forms of travel which are seriously impeded by these policies. B'Tselem captured the story of Nihayah Seif who explained how she is separated from her family in Jordan as a result of marrying a resident of Tulkarm in the West Bank and how she may never see her elderly mother again. With these anecdotes, we begin to sense the imposed immobility and its effects.

A final illustration is found in the more well-known case of the Palestinian soccer team which is the only national team in the world that competes under occupation, thus finding it difficult to get sufficient training together as a team as permits and checkpoints often impede their training and competition schedules; they have also suffered the loss of players in the bombing of Gaza in 2009.

Arguably the worst harm imposed concerns Jerusalem. As Rifat Kassis described it in 2014, Jerusalem represents 'the city we love most and visit least'. As both a religious and

political centre, Jerusalem is the most contested site and arouses the greatest passions. With the creation of Israel, Jerusalem was divided and both sides in the conflict have considered it vital for their peoples' future. With the Occupation from 1967, Israel took control of East Jerusalem but went further in illegally annexing it and saying an undivided Jerusalem is its capital.

In East Jerusalem, Israel has committed gross violations of international law. Rifat Kassis describes this by noting how simultaneously Israel works to dispossess the people of Jerusalem by revoking their residency unfairly and settle its own population in imposed settlements, with the effect that 'Israel is not simply trying to find its place in Jerusalem. Rather, it is trying to monopolise Jerusalem ... and exclude Palestinian Christians and Muslims from the city'.

Connected to this inability of Palestinians outside of Jerusalem to travel into Jerusalem is the attempt to expel Palestinians from residing in East Jerusalem. The Palestinians of East Jerusalem are in a special legal category under modern Israeli law. Most of them are not Israeli citizens, nor are they classified the same way as people in Gaza or the West Bank; instead they are permanent residents. In recent years, significant efforts have been made to displace the Palestinians of East Jerusalem, in some cases rendering families homeless for the second or third time since the Nakba of 1948.

A World Bank report of 2007 entitled 'Movement and access restrictions in the West Bank' informs us of the impacts of these restrictions. It states: 'While Israeli security concerns are undeniable and must be addressed, it is often difficult to reconcile the use of closure for security purposes from its use to expand and protect settlement activity and the relatively unhindered movement of settlers in and out of the West Bank. Limiting Palestinian access to the important agricultural and tourist potential of the Jordan Valley is one such example.'

This section has only briefly ad-



A section of the Apartheid Wall.

ressed the impediments to free movement of Palestinians. The justifications for such a system of impediments are contradictory, with some claiming they ensure Israeli security and others labelling it a blatant land grab and secret agenda for ethnic cleansing. However, a testimony gathered by B'Tselem from an anonymous Israeli soldier offers a different insight: 'The spirit of things was to make life unbearable for the Palestinians. Stop them, inspect them a thousand and one times so that they won't want to drive that route. It seemed stupid to me. You harm people's livelihood, harm people's life, detain children on the way to school, what good can come from this to the army, or to the country?'

### **The impediments to travel to and within Palestine imposed on international visitors**

A different issue to consider is the Israeli ability to determine who can visit Palestine and under what degree of difficulty. It is significant that tourists cannot get to Palestine without passing through an Israeli control point; since 1967 Israel has controlled all entry points to Palestine, including Ben Gurion International Airport in Israel and all land crossings including from Jordan, with access by the Allenby Bridge or Wadi Araba, and from Egypt, with the Taba Crossing. If one is travelling with the clear

intent to visit Palestine, it in fact can be quite difficult to pass through such border points.

As the *Grassroots Guide to Jerusalem* guidebook advises: 'Landing in Palestine can be stressful. Expect to face rigorous questioning about your political and religious affiliations, your recent travels and your plans while in the country. If you have stamps from other Arab countries in your passport you can expect prolonged questioning upon arrival and departure. Keep in mind that social media profiles may be accessed by guards as a condition of entry. Israeli authorities are interested in limiting the number of international activists and visitors to the "Palestinian territories".'

However, it is often even worse for Palestinian visitors with dual nationality, visitors of Palestinian descent as well as visitors of Arabic heritage. There is also no guarantee that people attempting to enter Israel as a gateway to Palestine through any crossing will not be turned back altogether, particularly if they are identified as supporters of Palestine.

Tourists are confronted with a series of impediments to movement into and around Palestine. One can simply be the lengthy and arduous extra border crossings that Israeli Occupation entails. For all but the most intrepid traveller, such impediments, insecurity and uncertainty deter the desire to visit Palestinian ar-



eas. Furthermore, if one hopes for the development of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, the fact that since 2001 it has been discouraged if not illegal for Israeli citizens to travel into Area A in the West Bank undermines any hope that understanding can develop through cross-cultural contact.

This discouragement of international tourism matters in a multitude of ways. Like many developing nations, Palestine looks to tourism as a source of income and employment, and it should have a competitive advantage with its holy sites, rich culture and unique natural assets. But more fundamentally in a world predicated on globalisation and the interaction of peoples, a country is left in a state of profound social isolation if cut off so starkly from the global community. This may in fact be a key reason why the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba and oppression has so little traction in some quarters against the Israeli narrative of the plucky little Western democracy in a sea of danger in the Middle East.

### Tourism as a tool for resisting enforced isolation

While Israel has worked very hard to isolate and control Palestine and Palestinians through the measures recounted here, there has been considerable creative resistance. Tourism in this context has become a means for connecting Palestinians to the external world and fostering solidarity. Palestine represents one of the leading sites for solidarity or justice tourism, advanced at a number of levels.

For instance, in reaction to the travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians of the West Bank which block them from the 'simple joys at the beach', a group of Israeli women formed a movement called 'We will not obey' with an aim to smuggle Palestinian women into Israel to visit the beach and other prohibited places. In a newspaper announcement they explained: 'We cannot assent to the le-



A sign warning Israelis against going into Area A, the area in the West Bank under full Palestinian control.

gality of the Law of Entry into Israel, which allows every Israeli and every Jew to move freely in all regions between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River while depriving Palestinians of this same right. They are not permitted free movement within the occupied territories nor are they allowed into the towns and cities across the green line, where their families, their nation, and their traditions are deeply rooted.

'They and we, all ordinary citizens, took this step with a clear and resolute mind. In this way we were privileged to experience one of the most beautiful and exciting days of our lives, to meet and befriend our brave Palestinian neighbours, and together with them, to be free women, if only for one day.'

Specifically focused on the Palestinian diaspora, the 'Know thy heritage' programme founded by Palestinian businessman Rateb Rabie, created to reconnect youth in the Palestinian diaspora with their homeland, demonstrates another approach. With funds raised from Palestinian businesses in the West Bank and the US, these tours have had less of a political focus than the Israeli Birthright tours they are compared to and instead

focus on economic ties for future investment and state development. While this cannot address one of the biggest issues in the conflict, 'the right of return', what it does do is ensure that Palestinians compelled to live in diaspora are helped to continue their connections to Palestine.

Palestine is also home to a cutting-edge tourism NGO, the Alternative Tourism Group of Palestine (ATG), which has an extensive programme of solidarity and justice tours. ATG Executive Director Rami Kassis has defined justice tourism as 'a social and cultural response to the policy of cultural domination as reflected in the globalisation of tourism'. ATG's work in Palestine occurs on a number of levels, from reaching religious pilgrims by calling on them to hear the 'Living Stones' of Palestine,

to solidarity tours aiding Palestinian farmers to undertake their olive harvests, to half-day tours to reach backpackers and the independent travel segment. ATG has modelled best practice in global-local commitment and action, as it models justice tourism practice, participates in policy and planning within Palestine, while also contributing to global action through such initiatives as the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum.

Additionally, travel and mobility has also been used by transnational solidarity activists as a tool for advocacy, consciousness-raising and tangible action. Prominent examples include the Gaza flotilla and the 2011-12 'aerial flotillas' which were/are aimed at drawing attention to Israel's border restrictions and the impacts of occupation as well as tangibly breaking the imposed isolation of the Palestinian people.

The Gaza flotillas were started in 2008 by a group of Palestinian, Israeli and international activists aiming to break the Israeli blockade imposed on Gaza by bringing in humanitarian assistance and to express solidarity with Gazans. The aerial flotillas followed with a campaign called 'Welcome to Palestine' and involved internationals

attempting to fly into Israel to reach Palestine from all over the world. Event organiser Fahdi Tantas stated: 'The idea was for them to come in and say, "We are going to Palestine", to change the discourse and what is required usually from a foreigner coming to Palestine. It is a basic right for them and for us Palestinians to receive our guests.'

However, the dangers of transnational solidarity activism were starkly revealed with the killing of nine activists in May 2010 when Israeli naval commandos stormed the Gaza flotilla ship the *Mavi Marmara*, sparking international outrage, but little change to Israeli practices.

One final initiative to mention is the 'Open Bethlehem' campaign and the Bethlehem passport initiative of 2005 which had a declared aim of making the city open to anyone in the world. In reaction to the isolation imposed by the building of the Apartheid Wall around Bethlehem and other impediments to access to and from the city, 'the initiative is designed to transcend imprisonment'. As the website stated: 'Open Bethlehem's vision is to support a lasting peace settlement between Palestine and Israel using Bethlehem as a doorway for global engagement. As an iconic city, and a Palestinian city, Bethlehem has both power and responsibility to act and use its global outreach to promote positive change.'

Open Bethlehem built a campaign focused on the Bethlehem passport, 'a symbolic citizenship of an iconic town that stands for Joy and Goodwill to all'. Such efforts are intended to raise awareness and promote solidarity.

However, these efforts represent small niches reaching only small numbers of tourists to the area. It is clear that Israel controls the vast majority of tourists who travel to Israel/Palestine and this has ramifications on the ability of Palestinians to connect with the outside world. As Rifat Kassis of Kairos Palestine stated: 'During the past few decades, Israel has actively prevented Palestinians from taking the initiative in their own tourism industry. Since Israel controls

all of Palestine's borders and regulates all movement inside those borders, impeding Palestinian-led tourism is just another tactic employed by a comprehensive occupation.'

Most tourists book with Israeli tourism agencies, use Israeli tour guides, stay in Israeli hotels, and therefore receive Israeli perspectives. In fact, tourists may visit sites like Bethlehem in the West Bank and not even realise they have crossed from Israel into Palestine. When this is added to Israel's capacity as an occupying power to restrict tourism infrastructure and tourism services (such as limiting Palestinian tour guide licences) and to deter the visitor in a multitude of ways, tourism in Palestine remains in an imposed infancy.

Despite this situation, Palestinians are forced to use tourism to the best of their capacities to foster solidarity through the social contact it might offer even in these inauspicious conditions. In fact Kassis has been one of the leaders of the Kairos Initiative which was launched in 2009 and challenged visitors, particularly pilgrims, to 'come and see'. As Kassis argued, these initiatives are based on truthfulness and 'was born of our belief in the significance of tourism as an economic, political, and spiritual force that can effectively and truthfully advocate for the Palestinian struggle and for peace with justice through Palestinian-organised tours'.

### Conclusion

For better or worse, our world is now characterised by mobility. Those who are mobile are able to better thrive in this era when being connected is everything. This article has looked at how obstacles to the benefits of travel and tourism are used to ghettoise Palestinians as an attempt to break their spirit and block their access to transnational solidarity. Yet, following the dialectics of oppression, travel and tourism are also clearly used as tools of resistance; in fact Palestine has gifted us the example of ATG which has been a global leader in justice tourism.

This holds relevance beyond the

borders of Palestine. It asks us to reimagine tourism: rather than being merely the hedonistic activity of modern mass tourism or, worse, the oppressive force of exploitation of workers and destination communities in the corporatised form of tourism, we see in this example the potentiality of a political form of tourism to create bonds of understanding, solidarity and political transformation. Freeing Palestine through travel and tourism may just be a step in freeing ourselves. ♦

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# The bitter irony of ‘1 billion tourists – 1 billion opportunities’

The following is the text of the Statement by the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum (TAAF) for World Tourism Day (27 September 2015), prepared by the Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team.

THIS year’s World Tourism Day theme, ‘1 Billion Tourists – 1 Billion Opportunities’, sounds like a slogan for an advert to entice consumers to buy a product like a laundry detergent or hamburger. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) invites us to celebrate one billion tourist arrivals per year and the seemingly unlimited growth of the travel and tourism industry; it is hoped that by 2030, almost two billion people will have embraced the tourist lifestyle.

UNWTO’s party could not take place at a more inconvenient time as the world is experiencing an acute humanitarian crisis with more people being displaced than at any time since World War II, according to UNHCR [the UN refugee agency]. As UNWTO cheers the one billion people officially counted as tourists, there is no appreciation of countless other ‘irregular tourists’ who are forced to travel because they have become homeless in their homelands due to war, civil strife, loss of livelihoods, environmental destruction and climate change impacts.

Although governments, tourism officials and businesses consider convenience, connectivity and mobility, health and safety for travellers as priorities, there are few legal and safe travel routes for the disadvantaged migrants and refugees who are seeking to reach destinations where they can rebuild their lives free of war, destitution and persecution.

While countries in the South have opened up and created a welcoming culture for vacationers, residential tourists and business travellers, many rich countries in the North are now implementing measures to combat the supposed threat of ‘illegal immigration’. The ‘irregular tourists’ are in-

creasingly criminalised, facing xenophobia plus policies of isolation and deterrence in destination countries.

Formerly open or lightly patrolled borders are closing. Israel has built a ‘Separation Wall’ (also dubbed ‘Apartheid Wall’) that violates Palestinians’ right to freedom of movement. The United States, Europe and Australia are also fortifying their borders, sometimes with barbed-wire fences and heavily armed police and military forces. The result is that the conventional travel industry is supplemented with a burgeoning multi-billion-dollar industry – that of human trafficking, which puts migrants’ and refugees’ lives at risk.

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## UNWTO must stop acting like a PR agency for the travel and tourism industry

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The notion of the Mediterranean Sea as a popular holiday heaven is rapidly eroding as it has become the world’s deadliest maritime migration route, with ships full of refugees capsizing and people, many of them children, drowning almost on a daily basis. There is now a state of exception in Europe. National governments have even begun to ‘temporarily’ suspend the Schengen agreement – the treaty that gives most EU citizens the right to travel freely across European borders – with the argument that the influx of migrants and refugees poses a ‘serious threat to public policy or internal security’.

The militarisation of borders has devastating consequences for human rights. Reports are mounting about callous – and in some cases illegal –

actions of authorities, which include denying entry to, arresting, summarily rejecting and returning refugees, using disproportionate force against migrants and refugees. For instance, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein recently strongly criticised the Hungarian government for breaching international law, saying the country’s harsh measures are ‘an entirely unacceptable infringement of the human rights of refugees and migrants. Seeking asylum is not a crime, and neither is entering a country irregularly.’

How these developments will affect the global travel and tourism trade is unpredictable at this point. But in the face of millions of displaced people being forsaken, UNWTO’s mantra of tourism’s potential for poverty reduction and sustainable development is a great travesty.

Given this situation of utmost emergency, UNWTO must stop acting like a PR agency for the travel and tourism industry and genuinely work for the common good of humanity as deemed appropriate for a UN body. It is unreasonable and immoral to talk about ‘1 billion opportunities’ including livelihood opportunities for the poor, while disregarding all research and scientific data that reveal tourism’s vast opportunity costs, including displacement, dispossession and impoverishment of people(s) particularly in the developing world.

An impartial and sincere review of tourism is long overdue to explore the question: tourism offers opportunities for whom? Victor Hugo’s saying ‘The paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor’ appears perfect to describe tourism in a world of growing inequality and receding human rights. ♦



# A new intifada for a new generation

Young Palestinians are making their own decisions in defiance of both Fatah and Hamas.

David Hearst

A FEW days before he stabbed and killed two ultra-orthodox Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem before being shot dead, Muhannad Halabi addressed himself on his Facebook wall to his president. Mahmoud Abbas had accused Israel in his UN speech of letting extremists into the Al-Aqsa compound.

‘Nice speech Mr President, but we do not recognise East and West Jerusalem. We know only that Jerusalem is one, undivided, and that every part of it is holy. Excuse me, Mr President, but what is happening to the women of Al-Aqsa and to Al-Aqsa itself will not be stopped by peaceful measures. We were not raised to be humiliated.’

The 19-year-old’s message was clear: the time for words is over. The Third Intifada, he said, has already started.

Halabi speaks for his generation. He was born a year after the second Oslo Accord was signed in Taba, which set up an interim Palestinian self-governing authority for the West Bank and Gaza. By the age of four, Halabi should have seen a comprehensive peace agreement in which Israel would have ceded control of the territories in exchange for peace. When Halabi was seven, Israel had begun constructing the wall that was to divide the West Bank into bantustans. By the time he was eight, Yasser Arafat had died, ridding Israel of a Palestinian leader it described as ‘two-faced’. He was replaced by Mahmoud Abbas, whose one face was, and is, implacably opposed to violence.

Halabi’s generation should have seen peace. It should have benefitted



**Palestinian youths hurl stones at Israeli soldiers following a protest against Jewish settlements near the West Bank city of Nablus. ‘A new generation is attempting to shake off its occupier.’**

from the plans of Tony Blair and Salam Fayyad to regenerate the economy of the West Bank. Instead, what this generation saw was 600,000 settlers, the gradual disappearance of Palestinian East Jerusalem, a Palestinian security force whose role was to stop protest, and the daily encroachments of Israeli Jews, who defined themselves initially as tourists, in the Al-Aqsa compound. Instead of a final settlement, Halabi’s generation has experienced the final loss of all hope.

This then, more than the numbers of deaths or injured, or the phenomenon of stabbing attacks occurring all over the country, is what makes this an intifada – which in Arabic means ‘shaking off’. A new generation is attempting to shake off its occupier. A new generation has rediscovered the struggle of its forebears. What happens in the following weeks, months or even years will become their struggle.

The spark for this is Al-Aqsa, a symbol which stone by stone is being attacked by the acid rain of Jerusa-

lem’s sectarian politics. Despite the Chief Rabbinate’s prohibition on Jews entering the compound it knows as the Temple Mount, the status quo at Al-Aqsa is changing. The Waqf, the Jordanian-controlled Islamic institution administering holy places, no longer collects entrance fees nor can it ban non-Muslims from passing through the Israeli-controlled gate.

‘While the Waqf continues to work with the police to enforce the Jewish prayer ban, it can no longer determine the size of Jewish groups or the rate of their entry; nor can it veto the entry of specific activists it considers provocateurs. Israel at times has allowed Jews to enter in groups of 10 to 30, even 50, including in army uniform, which previously had been forbidden,’ the International Crisis Group recently reported.

By 2012, Israeli members of parliament, deputy ministers and ministers were filmed declaring Israeli sovereignty over the entire site.

For Halabi’s generation this is not only a religious issue. Al-Aqsa is a symbol of national identity, the last

symbol standing of an identity which has been so comprehensively trashed by the Israeli state. It unifies both religious and secular Palestinians. The first Palestinians to attack religious Jews over Al-Aqsa came from a secular revolutionary group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Defending Al-Aqsa from the encroachment of national-religious Jews is an existential issue. It tells all Palestinians: 'If we don't fight for this, we might as well give up.'

Halabi did not need to be incited. Nor did he wait for orders from Fatah or Hamas. He made his own decision, as thousands of others are doing irrespective of whether they live in the West Bank, Gaza or Israel.

Both the First and Second Intifadas took the Palestinian leadership by surprise. The first was started when an Israeli army truck crashed into two vans carrying Palestinian workers, killing four of them. The second was ignited by Ariel Sharon, then in opposition, appearing at the Al-Aqsa compound with a thousand Israeli police officers and repeating the phrase that was broadcast when Israeli troops seized East Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War: 'The Temple Mount is in our hands.' But within days of each, the leadership asserted control and began giving orders.

Jamal Zakout, who wrote 'Communique No. 2' on behalf of the Unified National Leadership of the 1987 Intifada, reminded us of its purpose: 'It considered the Intifada, its leadership, and its grassroots activism as an integral part of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organisation], not a substitute for it.' Today the PLO, under Abbas's leadership, does not want to know, and, for that very reason, struggles to control the situation.

A recent poll conducted by pollster and political scientist Khalil Shikaki found that 42% of Palestinians believed that only an armed struggle would lead to an independent Palestinian state, and 57% no longer believed that a two-state solution was possible. Two-thirds wanted to replace Abbas as president.

The new generation is making its own decisions in defiance of both

Fatah and Hamas. If one picture encapsulates this, it was of a girl in jeans and a kuffiyeh handing rocks to a masked boy wearing a green Hamas headband. Secular and religious youth were at one in protest. Each and every youth who picks up a knife or throws a stone is their own leader.

### Unique factors

This creates unique dangers for Israel. It can deal with groups by arresting or assassinating their leaders and eventually negotiating a ceasefire. It cannot stop individuals from making their own desperate decisions. It can only provoke them more by resorting to house demolitions or other measures of collective punishment.

There are other unique factors about this intifada. The First and Second Intifadas were conducted from the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have been present since 1948, took part in protests at the start of the Second Intifada, but they were shortlived. Not since Land Day in 1976 have the Palestinians of '48 been at the forefront of popular protest. On 30 March 1976, thousands of Palestinians from the northern triangle region marched to protest the expropriation of huge tracts of land as part of an openly declared policy to 'Judaize' the area.

Today, however, no wall or separation barrier contains the uprising. The recent attacks have been taking place in areas the PLO has no control of – East Jerusalem, Afula, Tel Aviv. There are other factors. This is the first intifada where Palestinians are not looking for neighbouring Arab states to intervene. Perhaps it's a sign of the times or the chaos around Israel's own borders.

So far, Israel's reaction to the intifada has been to lose trust in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and back even more right-wing leaders. The latest poll published by the *Yediot Ahronot* daily on 11 October showed that 73% were dissatisfied with Netanyahu's handling of the recent attacks. When asked who was best qualified to deal with them, two ultra-nationalists, former Foreign

Minister Avigdor Lieberman and pro-settler Education Minister Naftali Bennett, came first and second. As foreign minister, Lieberman commissioned lawyers to examine plans for the so-called 'static transfer' of the Palestinian population of northern Israel to a Palestinian state.

But Israelis are also being encouraged to take the law into their own hands. Already a heavily armed society – in 2013 about 160,000 permits were issued for private citizens to carry firearms, and 130,000 for organisations – Israel is about to become more so. In Jerusalem this is with the explicit encouragement of mayor Nir Barkat, who along with his bodyguard disabled a Palestinian who had stabbed a Jewish man on the street. Afterwards Barkat was seen in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Hanina with an assault rifle. Vigilante mobs have already appeared hunting for Palestinian workers on the streets of Jerusalem, planning their route to areas where Palestinian cleaning workers would be employed.

All the ingredients are there for a long and bloody struggle, in which countless innocents on both sides will be killed. If you like, Israel has discovered the secret that has eluded generations of physicists: the secret of perpetual motion. Every time its security establishment congratulates itself on having extinguished one intifada, another one comes. Each time the flame is rekindled by another generation's personal experience of despair, hopelessness and indignity.

There is only one way out of this cycle of conquest, repression and resistance. It is for the Jewish Israelis to look themselves in the mirror and reconcile – as equals – with the people of the land that they now share. For one reason and one reason only. Palestinians are here to stay, one generation after another. ♦

*David Hearst is editor-in-chief of Middle East Eye (www.middleeasteye.net), from which this article is reproduced. He was chief foreign leader writer of The Guardian, former Associate Foreign Editor, European Editor, Moscow Bureau Chief, European Correspondent and Ireland Correspondent. He joined The Guardian from The Scotsman, where he was education correspondent.*

# A short history of US bombing of civilian facilities

The recent bombing by the US of a civilian hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan run by the international medical humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières provoked almost universal outrage. But as *Jon Schwarz* shows below, this bombing of a civilian facility is not the first.

ON 3 October, a US AC-130 gunship attacked a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières in Kunduz, Afghanistan, partially destroying it. Twelve staff members and 10 patients, including three children, were killed, and 37 people were injured. According to MSF, the US had previously been informed of the hospital's precise location, and the attack continued for 30 minutes after staff members desperately called the US military.

The US first claimed the hospital had been 'collateral damage' in an airstrike aimed at 'individuals' elsewhere who were 'threatening the force'. Since then, various vague and contradictory explanations have been offered by the US and Afghan governments, both of which promise to investigate the bombing. MSF has called the attack a war crime and demanded an independent investigation by a commission set up under the Geneva Conventions.

While the international outcry has been significant, history suggests this is less because of what happened and more because of whom it happened to. The US has repeatedly attacked civilian facilities in the past but the targets have generally not been affiliated with a European, Nobel Peace Prize-winning humanitarian organisation such as MSF.

Below is a sampling of such incidents since the 1991 Gulf War.

## Infant Formula Production Plant, Abu Ghraib, Iraq (21 January 1991)

On the seventh day of Operation Desert Storm, aimed at evicting Iraqi military forces from Kuwait, the US-led coalition bombed the Infant Formula Production Plant in the Abu



Debris after a US airstrike on a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières in Kunduz, Afghanistan. The US has repeatedly attacked other civilian facilities in the past.

Ghraib suburb of Baghdad. Iraq declared that the factory was exactly what its name said, but the administration of President George HW Bush claimed it was 'a production facility for biological weapons'. Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, chimed in to say, 'It is not an infant formula factory. It was a biological weapons facility – of that we are sure.' The US media chortled about Iraq's clumsy, transparent propaganda, and CNN's Peter Arnett was attacked by US politicians for touring the damaged factory and reporting that 'whatever else it did, it did produce infant formula'.

Iraq was telling the truth. When Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, defected to Jordan in 1995, he had every incentive to undermine Saddam, since he hoped the US would help install him as his father-in-law's successor – but he told CNN 'there is nothing military about that place. ... It only produced baby milk'. The CIA's own investigation later concluded the site had been bombed 'in the mistaken belief that it was a key BW [Biological Weapon]

facility'. The original US claims have nevertheless proven impossible to stamp out. The George W Bush administration, making the case for invading Iraq in 2003, portrayed the factory as a symbol of Iraqi deceit. When the Newseum opened in 2008, it included Arnett's 1991 reporting in a section devoted to – in the *New York Times*' description – 'examples of distortions that mar the profession'.

## Air raid shelter, Amiriyah, Iraq (13 February 1991)

The US purposefully targeted an air raid shelter near the Baghdad airport with two 2,000-pound laser-guided bombs, which punched through 10 feet of concrete and killed at least 408 Iraqi civilians. A BBC journalist reported that 'we saw the charred and mutilated remains. ... They were piled onto the back of a truck; many were barely recognisable as human.' Meanwhile, Army Lt. Gen. Thomas Kelly of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said: 'We are chagrined if [civilian] people were hurt, but the only information we have about people being hurt is coming out of the con-



trolled press in Baghdad.' Another US general claimed the shelter was 'an active command-and-control structure', while anonymous officials said military trucks and limousines for Iraq's senior leadership had been seen at the building.

In his 1995 CNN interview, Hussein Kamel said, 'There was no leadership there. There was a transmission apparatus for the Iraqi intelligence, but the allies had the ability to monitor that apparatus and knew that it was not important.' The Iraqi blogger Riverbend later wrote that several years after the attack, she went to the shelter and met a 'small, slight woman' who now lived in the shelter and gave visitors unofficial tours. Eight of her nine children had been killed in the bombing.

**Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory, Khartoum, Sudan (20 August 1998)**

After al Qaeda attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Clinton administration targeted the Al Shifa factory with 13 cruise missiles, killing one person and wounding 11. According to President Bill Clinton, the plant was 'associated with the bin Laden network' and was 'involved in the production of materials for chemical weapons'.

The Clinton administration never produced any convincing evidence that this was true. By 2005, the best the US could do was say, as the *New York Times* characterised it, that it had not 'ruled out the possibility' that the original claims were right. The long-term damage to Sudan was enormous. Jonathan Belke of the Near East Foundation pointed out a year after the bombing that the plant had produced '90% of Sudan's major pharmaceutical products' and contended that due to its destruction 'tens of thousands of people – many of them children – have suffered and died from malaria, tuberculosis and other treatable diseases'. Sudan has repeatedly requested a UN investigation of the bombing, with no success.

**Train bombing, Grdelica, Serbia (12 April 1999)**

During the US-led bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo war, an F-

15E fighter jet fired two remotely-guided missiles that hit a train crossing a bridge near Grdelica, killing at least 14 civilians. Gen. Wesley Clark, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe, called it 'an unfortunate incident we all regret'. While the F-15 crew was able to control the missiles after they were launched, NATO released footage taken from the plane to demonstrate how quickly the train was moving and how little time the jet's crew had to react. The German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* later reported that the video had been sped up three times. The paper quoted a US Air Force spokesperson who said this was accidental, and they had not noticed this until months later – by which point 'we did not deem it useful to go public with this'.

**Radio Television Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia (23 April 1999)**

Sixteen employees of Serbia's state broadcasting system were killed during the Kosovo war when NATO intentionally targeted its headquarters in Belgrade. President Clinton gave an underwhelming defence of the bombing: 'Our military leaders at NATO believe ... that the Serb television is an essential instrument of Mr. Milosevic's command and control. ... It is not, in a conventional sense, therefore, a media outlet. That was a decision they made, and I did not reverse it.' US envoy Richard Holbrooke told the Overseas Press Club immediately after the attack that it was 'an enormously important and, I think, positive development'. Amnesty International later stated it was 'a deliberate attack on a civilian object and as such constitutes a war crime'.

**Chinese embassy, Belgrade, Serbia (7 May 1999)**

Also during the Kosovo war, the US bombed the Chinese embassy in Serbia's capital, killing three staff and wounding more than 20. The defence secretary at the time, William Cohen, said it was a terrible mistake: 'One of our planes attacked the wrong target because the bombing instructions were based on an outdated map.' The

*Observer* newspaper in the UK later reported the US had in fact deliberately targeted the embassy 'after discovering it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications'. The *Observer* quoted 'a source in the US National Imagery and Mapping Agency' calling Cohen's version of events 'a damned lie'. Prodded by the media watchdog organisation Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the *New York Times* produced its own investigation finding 'no evidence that the bombing of the embassy had been a deliberate act', but rather that it had been caused by a 'bizarre chain of missteps'. The article concluded by quoting Porter Goss, then chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, as saying he believed the bombing was not deliberate – 'unless some people are lying to me'.

**Red Cross complex, Kabul, Afghanistan (16 October and 26 October 2001)**

At the beginning of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the US attacked the complex housing the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kabul. In an attempt to prevent such incidents in the future, the US conducted detailed discussions with the Red Cross about the location of all of its installations in the country. Then the US bombed the same complex again. The second attack destroyed warehouses containing tons of food and supplies for refugees. 'Whoever is responsible will have to come to Geneva for a formal explanation,' said a Red Cross spokesperson. 'Firing, shooting, bombing a warehouse clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem is a very serious incident. ... Now we've got 55,000 people without that food or blankets, with nothing at all.'

**Al Jazeera office, Kabul, Afghanistan (13 November 2001)**

Several weeks after the Red Cross attacks, the US bombed the Kabul bureau of Al Jazeera, destroying it and damaging the nearby office of the BBC. Al Jazeera's managing director said the channel had repeatedly informed the US military of its office's location.

### Al Jazeera office, Baghdad, Iraq (8 April 2003)

Soon after the start of the US-led invasion of Iraq, the US bombed the Baghdad office of Al Jazeera, killing reporter Tarek Ayoub and injuring another journalist. David Blunkett, the British home secretary at the time, subsequently revealed that a few weeks before the attack he had urged Prime Minister Tony Blair to bomb Al Jazeera's transmitter in Baghdad. Blunkett argued, 'I don't think that there are targets in a war that you can rule out because you don't actually have military personnel inside them if they are attempting to win a propaganda battle on behalf of your enemy.'

In 2005, the British newspaper *The Mirror* reported on a British government memorandum recording a 16 April 2004 conversation between Blair and President Bush at the height of the US assault on Fallujah in Iraq. The Bush administration was infuriated by Al Jazeera's coverage of Fallujah, and according to *The Mirror*, Bush had wanted to bomb the channel at its Qatar headquarters and elsewhere. However, the article says, Blair argued him out of it. Blair subsequently called *The Mirror*'s claims a 'conspiracy theory'. Meanwhile, his attorney general threatened to use the Official Secrets Act to prosecute any news outlet that published further information about the memo, and, in a secret trial, did in fact prosecute and send to jail a civil servant for leaking it.

### Palestine Hotel, Baghdad, Iraq (8 April 2003)

The same day as the 2003 bombing of the Al Jazeera office in Baghdad, a US tank fired a shell at the 15th floor of the Palestine Hotel, where most foreign journalists were then staying. Two reporters were killed: Taras Protsyuk, a cameraman for Reuters, and Jose Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish network Telecinco. An investigation by the Committee to Protect Journalists concluded that the attack, 'while not deliberate, was avoidable'. ♦

*Jon Schwarz is a senior writer and editor with The Intercept (theintercept.com), from which this article is reproduced.*

## Negotiating a 'Development Agenda' for the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

Edited by Martin Khor and Sangeeta Shashikant

THE World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), a UN agency that deals with issues of intellectual property rights, has been undergoing an interesting change in recent years. In 2004, many developing countries initiated a process of reform to make WIPO development-oriented, which they consider to be important for a UN agency. The initiative, which is known as the 'Development Agenda', has since snowballed into a movement to review the role of intellectual property rights in the process of development.

According to developing countries, NGOs and experts, WIPO has been too much oriented towards promoting IP at the expense of the wider development concerns and public interest. Whether the Development Agenda movement succeeds in reorienting WIPO remains to be seen especially since this initiative has been resisted by developed countries, that want to cling on to the status quo.

On the 'Development Agenda' initiative, this book is an eyewitness account of the twists and turns of the Development Agenda movement. It is indispensable for those who want to understand the origins, rationale and history of the Development Agenda at WIPO.

Negotiating a  
'Development  
Agenda' for  
the World  
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Property  
Organisation  
(WIPO)

Edited by Martin Khor  
and Sangeeta Shashikant

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# Iraq, Afghanistan and other special ops 'successes'

President Obama's recent decision to dispatch US Special Operations forces to Iraq caused a stir but few are aware of the record number of such deployments in recent years. *Nick Turse* looks into claims of their record of success.

THEY're some of the best soldiers in the world: highly trained, well equipped, and experts in weapons, intelligence gathering and battlefield medicine. They study foreign cultures and learn local languages. They're smart, skilful, wear some very iconic headgear, and their 12-member teams are 'capable of conducting the full spectrum of special operations, from building indigenous security forces to identifying and targeting threats to US national interests'.

They're also quite successful. At least they think so.

'In the last decade, Green Berets have deployed into 135 of the 195 recognised countries in the world. Successes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Trans-Sahel Africa, the Philippines, the Andean Ridge, the Caribbean, and Central America have resulted in an increasing demand for [Special Forces] around the globe,' reads a statement on the website of US Army Special Forces Command.

The Army's Green Berets are among the best known of America's elite forces, but they're hardly alone. Navy SEALs, Air Force Air Commandos, Army Rangers, Marine Corps Raiders, as well as civil affairs personnel, logisticians, administrators, analysts and planners, among others, make up US Special Operations forces (SOF). They are the men and women who carry out America's most difficult and secret military missions. Since 9/11, US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has grown in every conceivable way from funding and personnel to global reach and deployments. In 2015, according to Special Operations Command spokesman Ken McGraw, US Special Operations forces deployed to a record-shattering 147 countries – 75% of the



The Green Berets are among the best known of the US' elite Special Operations forces.

nations on the planet, which represents a jump of 145% since the waning days of the Bush administration. On any day of the year, in fact, America's most elite troops can be found in 70 to 90 nations.

There is, of course, a certain logic to imagining that the increasing global sweep of these deployments is a sign of success. After all, why would you expand your operations into ever more nations if they weren't successful? So I decided to pursue that record of 'success' with a few experts on the subject.

I started by asking Sean Naylor, a man who knows America's most elite troops as few do and the author of *Relentless Strike: The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command*, about the claims made by Army Special Forces Command. He responded with a hearty laugh. 'I'm going to give whoever wrote that the benefit of the doubt that they were referring to successes that Army Special Forces were at least perceived to

have achieved in those countries rather than the overall US military effort,' he says. As he points out, the first post-9/11 months may represent the zenith of success for those troops. The initial operations in the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 – carried out largely by US Special Forces, the CIA and the Afghan Northern Alliance, backed by US airpower – were 'probably the high point' in the history of unconventional warfare by Green Berets, according to Naylor. As for the years that followed? 'There were all sorts of mistakes, one could argue, that were made after that.' He is, however, quick to point out that 'the vast majority of the decisions [about operations and the war, in general] were not being made by Army Special Forces soldiers'.

For Linda Robinson, author of *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare*, the high number of deployments is likely a mistake in itself. 'Being in 70 countries ... may not be the best use



of SOF,' she told me. Robinson, a senior international policy analyst at the Rand Corporation, advocates a 'more thoughtful and focused approach to the employment of SOF', citing enduring missions in Colombia and the Philippines as the most successful special ops training efforts in recent years. 'It might be better to say "Let's not sprinkle around the SOF guys like fairy dust." Let's instead focus on where we think we can have a success ... If you want more successes, maybe you need to start reining in how many places you're trying to cover.'

Most of the special ops deployments in those 147 countries are the type Robinson expresses scepticism about – short-term training missions by 'white' operators like Green Berets (as opposed to the 'black ops' man-hunting missions by the elite of the elite that captivate Hollywood and video gamers). Between 2012 and 2014, for example, Special Operations forces carried out 500 Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions in as many as 67 countries, practising everything from combat casualty care and marksmanship to small unit tactics and desert warfare alongside local forces. And JCETs only scratch the surface when it comes to special ops missions to train proxies and allies. Special Operations forces, in fact, conduct a variety of training efforts globally.

A recent \$500 million programme, run by Green Berets, to train a Syrian force of more than 15,000 over several years, for instance, crashed and burned in a very public way, yielding just four or five fighters in the field before being abandoned. This particular failure followed much larger, far more expensive attempts to train the Afghan and Iraqi security forces in which Special Operations troops played a smaller yet still critical role. The results of these efforts recently prompted retired Army colonel Andrew Bacevich to write that Washington should now assume, 'when it comes to organising, training, equipping, and motivating foreign armies, that the United States is essentially clueless'.



A video grab purporting to show Islamic State (IS) fighters in Iraq's Nineveh province. The US Joint Special Operations Command's failure to completely destroy al-Qaeda in Iraq allowed IS to grow.

### The elite warriors of the warrior elite

In addition to training, another core role of Special Operations forces is direct action – counterterror missions like low-profile drone assassinations and kill/capture raids by muscled-up, high-octane operators. The exploits of the men – and they are mostly men (and mostly Caucasian ones at that) – behind these operations are chronicled in Naylor's epic history of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the secret counterterrorism organisation that includes the military's most elite and shadowy units like the Navy's SEAL Team 6 and the Army's Delta Force. A compendium of more than a decade of derring-do from Afghanistan to Iraq, Somalia to Syria, *Relentless Strike* paints a portrait of a highly-trained, well-funded, hard-charging counterterror force with global reach. Naylor calls it the 'perfect hammer', but notes the obvious risk that 'successive administrations would continue to view too many national security problems as nails'.

When I ask Naylor about what JSOC has ultimately achieved for the country in the Obama years, I get the impression that he doesn't find my question particularly easy to answer. He points to hostage rescues, like the high-profile effort to save 'Captain Phillips' of the *Maersk Alabama* after the cargo ship was hijacked by

Somali pirates, and asserts that such missions might 'inhibit others from seizing Americans'. One wonders, of course, if similar high-profile failed missions since then, including the SEAL raid that ended in the deaths of hostages Luke Somers, an American photojournalist, and Pierre Korkie, a South African teacher, as well as the unsuccessful attempt to rescue the late aid worker Kayla Mueller, might then have just the opposite effect.

'Afghanistan, you've got another fairly devilish strategic problem there,' Naylor says and offers up a question of his own: 'You have to ask what would have happened if al-Qaeda in Iraq had not been knocked back on its heels by Joint Special Operations Command between 2005 and 2010?' Naylor calls attention to JSOC's special abilities to menace terror groups, keeping them unsteady through relentless intelligence gathering, raiding and man-hunting. 'It leaves them less time to take the offensive, to plan missions, and to plot operations against the United States and its allies,' he explains. 'Now that doesn't mean that the use of JSOC is a substitute for a strategy ... It's a tool in a policymaker's toolkit.'

Indeed. If what JSOC can do is bump off and capture individuals and pressure such groups but not decisively roll up militant networks, despite years of anti-terror whack-a-mole efforts, it sounds like a recipe for spending endless lives and end-

less funds on endless war. 'It's not my place as a reporter to opine as to whether the present situations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen were "worth" the cost in blood and treasure borne by US Special Operations forces,' Naylor tells me in a follow-up email. 'Given the effects that JSOC achieved in Iraq (Uday and Qusay Hussein killed, Saddam Hussein captured, [al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab] Zarqawi killed, al-Qaeda in Iraq eviscerated), it's hard to say that JSOC did not have an impact on that nation's recent history.'

Impacts, of course, are one thing, successes another. Special Operations Command, in fact, hedges its bets by claiming that it can only be as successful as the global commands under which its troops operate in each area of the world, including European Command, Pacific Command, Africa Command, Southern Command, Northern Command and Central Command or CENTCOM, the geographic combatant command that oversees operations in the Greater Middle East. 'We support the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) – if they are successful, we are successful; if they fail, we fail,' says SOCOM's website.

With this in mind, it's helpful to return to Naylor's question: What if al-Qaeda in Iraq, which flowered in the years after the US invasion, had never been targeted by JSOC as part of a man-hunting operation going after its foreign fighters, financiers and military leaders? Given that the even more brutal Islamic State (IS) grew out of that targeted terror group, that IS was fuelled in many ways, say experts, by both US actions and inaction, that its leader's rise was bolstered by US operations, that 'US training helped mould' another of its chiefs, and that a US prison served as its 'boot camp', and given that the Islamic State now holds a significant swath of Iraq, was JSOC's campaign against its predecessor a net positive or a negative? Were special ops efforts in Iraq (and therefore in CENTCOM's area of operations) – JSOC's post-9/11 showcase counterterror campaign – a success or a failure?

Naylor notes that JSOC's failure to completely destroy al-Qaeda in Iraq allowed IS to grow and eventually sweep 'across northern Iraq in 2014, seizing town after town from which JSOC and other US forces had evicted al-Qaeda in Iraq at great cost several years earlier'. This, in turn, led to the rushing of special ops advisers back into the country to aid the fight against the Islamic State, as well as to that programme to train anti-Islamic State Syrian fighters that foundered and then imploded. By this spring, JSOC operators were not only back in Iraq and also on the ground in Syria, but they were soon conducting drone campaigns in both of those tottering nations.

This special ops merry-go-round in Iraq is just the latest in a long series of fiascos, large and small, to bedevil America's elite troops. Over the years, in that country, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, special operators have regularly been involved in all manner of mishaps, embroiled in various scandals, and implicated in numerous atrocities. Recently, for instance, members of the Special Operations forces have come under scrutiny for an air strike on a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Afghanistan that killed at least 22 patients and staff, for an alliance with 'unsavoury partners' in the Central African Republic, for the ineffective and abusive Afghan police they trained and supervised, and for a shady deal to provide SEALs with untraceable silencers that turned out to be junk, according to prosecutors.

### Winners and losers

JSOC was born of failure, a phoenix rising from the ashes of Operation Eagle Claw, the humiliating attempt to rescue 53 American hostages from the US Embassy in Iran in 1980 that ended, instead, in the deaths of eight US personnel. Today, the elite force trades on an aura of success in the shadows. Its missions are the stuff of modern myths.

In his advance praise for Naylor's book, one cable news analyst called

JSOC's operators 'the finest warriors who ever went into combat'. Even accepting this – with apologies to the Mongols, the Varangian Guard, Persia's Immortals, and the Ten Thousand of Xenophon's *Anabasis* – questions remain: Have these 'warriors' actually been successful beyond budget battles and the box office? Is exceptional tactical prowess enough? Are battlefield triumphs and the ability to batter terror networks through relentless raiding the same as victory? Such questions bring to mind an exchange that Army colonel Harry Summers, who served in Vietnam, had with a North Vietnamese counterpart in 1975. 'You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield,' Summers told him. After pausing to ponder the comment, Colonel Tu replied, 'That may be so. But it is also irrelevant.'

So what of those Green Berets who deployed to 135 countries in the last decade? And what of the Special Operations forces sent to 147 countries in 2015? And what about those Geographic Combatant Commanders across the globe who have hosted all those special operators?

I put it to Vietnam veteran Andrew Bacevich, author of *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*. 'As far back as Vietnam,' he tells me, 'the United States military has tended to confuse inputs with outcomes. Effort, as measured by operations conducted, bomb tonnage dropped or bodies counted, is taken as evidence of progress made. Today, tallying up the number of countries in which Special Operations forces are present repeats this error. There is no doubt that US Special Operations forces are hard at it in lots of different places. It does not follow that they are thereby actually accomplishing anything meaningful.'

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# Ethnicity in Nepal's new constitution: From politics of culture to politics of justice

In September this year, Nepal's Constituent Assembly promulgated the country's new constitution after a protracted constitutional process lasting nearly nine years.

In many ways, the document is a remarkable achievement and embodies many progressive and positive principles. To be sure, it did not succeed in satisfying the aspirations of a number of ethnic groups such as the Madheshis and Tharus. But

in a country of more than a hundred ethnic groups, this failure was not irremediable, as the country's leaders made it clear that they were open to further amendment to accommodate such grievances. Unfortunately, India's unwarranted interference in this internal matter (see following article) has muddied the waters.

In the following article *Mallika Shakya* offers background analysis of Nepal's constitutional odyssey and the varied interpretations of the decade-long struggle waged by the Maoist movement to realise their demand for a new constitution.

NEPAL promulgated its constitution on 20 September – the first after ending the monarchy, and one replacing the interim constitution in place since 2007. That interim constitution had been put in place to mark the peace agreement with the Nepali Maoists, mainstreaming them into democratic politics and unarming them under the UN mediation. While there were other obstacles in finalising the constitution, the hardest nut to crack has been the issue of federalism because it involved finding a way to work Nepal's multiple ethnic and regional identities into the mono-ethnic nationalism institutionalised by the state thus far.

There are more than a hundred ethnic groups in Nepal scattered in its diverse terrain ranging from the Himalayas in the north to the Tarai/Madhesh flatlands of the south. The caste hill Hindu elite (CHHE), comprised mostly of Bahuns and Chhetris, rose to power after Prithvi Narayan Shah, a Chhetri king, conquered numerous small kingdoms to form the modern state of Nepal in 1769, and they remained privileged even after Nepal became democratic in 1990. The indigenous nationalities from the hills (Janajatis), Hindu low castes



Students light candles to celebrate Nepal's new constitution, which was promulgated on 20 September.

(Dalits) and flatland dwellers (Madheshis) remained marginalised in all spheres of public life. The Nepali Maoists targeted ethnic exploitation during their People's War between 1996 and 2006 and were the first to demand a new constitution.

In this article, I briefly summarise the constitutional negotiations spanning nine years, showing that ethnicity and exploitation took centre-stage, and this informs a review, in the second part of the article, of an-

thropologists' take on the Maoists and ethnic politics in Nepal.

## Nine years, two assemblies and one constitution

The first Constituent Assembly began its term exuberantly in 2008. Its first act was to officially dethrone Hindu King Gyanendra, who had assumed power in 2001 after the royal family was allegedly massacred by the crown prince, who later shot him-



self dead. Initially a constitutional monarch, like his slain brother, King Birendra, Gyanendra committed a coup d'état of sorts, trying to sideline all political parties based on what he said was an urgent need to clamp down on Maoist guerillas. This failed in 2006 not least because the parties, especially the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist–Leninist) – referred jointly as NC–UML hereafter – instead joined hands with the Maoists to secure a comprehensive peace agreement and end a decade-long People's War.

However, as they sat down to write the constitution, disagreements surfaced. The Maoists and Madheshis, significantly large in number in the first Assembly, wanted ethnic grievances about persistent historical inequalities to be addressed and overcome by way of federalisation and affirmative action. The NC–UML instead argued that federalisation, if done, should be based on economic viability. Multiple maps with varying numbers of federal states and how these should be delineated floated in the Assembly, and expert committees were commissioned to advise on technical matters. Although the Maoists and Madheshis could have secured a majority at this time, all parties agreed that a constitution should be promulgated only through consensus (*sarvasammati*) and not majority (*bahumat*). Unfortunately, however, a consensus could not be reached, and after the Supreme Court ruled against extending its term, the Assembly formally disbanded at midnight on 28 May 2012.

The second Constituent Assembly, emerging from general elections in 2013, had a different composition. The federalist forces (i.e., the Maoists and Madheshis) secured many fewer seats while the old parties NC–UML won the majority. The Assembly remained caught in a deadlock even as the opposition intensified protests to ensure that the state stayed committed to federalism and that ethnic grievances were addressed. An attempt to override the earlier understanding on *sarvasammati* to 'fast-



**Nepal's Constituent Assembly. After a protracted deadlock, a '16-point deal' was struck to pass the constitution through the Assembly.**

track' the constitution-writing process through *bahumat* backfired on NC–UML forces when the Maoists and Madheshis physically barred the constitution document from reaching the speaker of the Assembly by encircling (*gherao*) the rostrum.

Three months after failed attempts at fast-tracking, Nepal was hit with a devastating earthquake on 25 April 2015. With more than 9,000 deaths and 22,000 injured, the country united in grief. Capitalising on this fleeting moment of national unity, the three largest parties in the Constituent Assembly – NC–UML and the Maoists – but also one of the many factions among the Madheshi parties seized a '16-point deal' to pass the constitution through the Assembly. Even though the only Madheshi faction walked out because the federal map that emerged from this deal overlooked its concerns, the 'big three' still went ahead amid wide protests in the southern flatlands of Tarai/Madhesh.

That the battle on federalism was so acrimonious in terms of ethnic and regional divisions of power shows the centrality of ethnicity and its political representation in Nepal's ongoing transformation. This is what prompts me to review how anthropologists have problematised ethnicity and identity in Nepal, especially in the context of the People's War led by the Maoists that lasted a decade. Below, I show how this focus and its very particular understanding of how to research a 'people's war' now almost overshadows all other ways of under-

standing the Maoist movement and its aftermath. I offer some preliminary reflections on how our research focus and questions may be adjusted.

### **An anthropology of the People's War**

Anthropologists have been reluctant to problematise the ethnic realpolitik at play in their field sites. Among the first to produce ethnographies of villages under Maoist influence was Anne de Sales (2000), who argued that the Magar Janajatis from the Maoist heartland in Rolpa were 'cleverly' exploited by the Maoists to protest state indifference to their isolation. Judith Pettigrew (2004) argued that young people in Maurigaon joined the guerillas rather as a rite of passage toward 'modernity' than as an act of political conscience. Much of the early anthropological literature went on to portray the Maoists as crude rebels piggybacking on cultural idioms to sell communist jargon while the villagers were depicted as innocent victims caught in the crossfire between the rebels and the state. The politics of the (guerilla) war itself formed just a backdrop in anthropological narratives, which were largely put together through secondary sources and not ethnography per se. Ethnographies of political institutions – Maoist and others – were rare. In other words, early ethnographies established few connections between the events in individual villages and a national phe-

nomenon, which rested on an ideology speaking to broader issues and which had an apparatus similar to many revolutionary movements in the era of decolonisation.

To better understand how anthropologists studying Nepal's People's War have dealt with the discipline's more general and fairly existential problem of explaining the 'part' while not losing sight of the 'whole', I will divide the corpus of anthropological writings on the People's War into two approaches. The first focuses on the Maoist movement itself and explores the ideology and practice of Nepali Maoists as armed rebels. The second chiefly considers the everyday lives of ordinary people living in Maoist areas. The latter approach soon became dominant whereas the former remains a rarity.

Saubhagya Shah (2004) correctly identified that Nepali Maoists focused less on Mao's economic and political programmatic while they offered greater clarity and commitment on proposals for ethno-religious and regional mobilisation. Philippe Ramirez (2004) contextualised the Nepali Maoist movement with similar movements elsewhere in the world. Regrettably, this line of anthropological writing more or less disappeared after Shah died a few years later and Ramirez left Nepal to study northeast India.

The second group of writings has proven prolific. Almost all of the writings in this category took the position that the ethnic associations and their leaders 'oscillated' between concerns that the Maoists were either 'exploiting' ethnicity or could help realise greater equality among ethnic groups (Lecomte-Tilouine 2004: 129). Based on research in Nepal's central hills, Shneiderman and Turin (2004: 103) argued that even if the Maoists were 'quick to adopt' cultural means to spread their messages, they offered no reassurances towards ethnic autonomy or a federal state. The Maoists were portrayed as opportunists adopting the stylistics of Hindu lifecycle rituals to articulate emancipatory class struggle but refraining from making any commitment on eth-



The Nepali Maoists targeted ethnic exploitation during their People's War between 1996 and 2006 and were the first to demand a new constitution.

nic justice. In other words, anthropology contributed to a discourse portraying the Maoists as 'outsiders' and knowledgeable exploiters of culture in pursuit of a crude party agenda promoting emancipatory class struggle (de Sales 2003). The central argument of Pettigrew's (2004) 'first hand' account of living conditions in insurgency-affected areas was that villagers negotiated the terms of Maoist intrusion into their intimate spaces (houses and courtyards) by invoking cultural protocol of hospitality.

Although more recent writings largely reproduced this second genre of anthropological approaches to the People's War, there have been a few exceptions. Sara Beth Shneiderman (2009) is probably among the few who confessed that the size of the Maoist rally in her field site made her rethink earlier claims, and she acknowledged that the persistence of ethnic exploitation and their campaign against this might have offered the Maoists a hegemonic device against state. Susan Hangen (2013: 124) further substantiated this hegemony argument in her study of ethnic interlocutors' boycotting of a major Hindu festival, Dashain, in the eastern hills as a rebellious 'mnemonic practice'. However, anthropologists who contributed to a volume edited by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine (2013) on the 'revolution in Nepal' focus primarily on 'tears' and what she called a 'libidinal economy'.

In sum, it may be fair to say that accounts of the People's War in Ne-

pal have kept the wider, national and ultimately decisive 'politics' outside of their ethnographic gaze. Otherwise, such politics have been reduced without further questioning to 'everyday politics' – to the extent that even ethnographies claiming to analyse terror and violence, *jan sarkar* (people's government) and Maoist model villages have muted the realpolitik that would change Nepal's constitution for good.

The case of the People's War in Nepal and how this culminated in constitutional change and an end to royal rule then indicates how in anthropology it still seems possible to deny universalistic claims on modernity by way of localising desire(s) for emancipation and denying the wider ambition of villagers to end conditions of terror. What a future anthropological research agenda on Nepal may want to illuminate is not the obvious fact that there are overlaps between party tactics and cultural-religious sentiments, but instead how the movement originated, gained momentum and then transformed itself through a complex web of alliances and counter-alliances between political parties, cultural entities and others. Such a reminder might be timely as Nepal is turning a new constitutional page to shed Hindu monarchy and embrace a multiethnic federal structure. ♦

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- CPN (Maoist) had given a big hope for peace, stability and development in Nepal. We recall our solidarity we extended during Jana-andolan II of Nepal in 2006. The newly promulgated constitution in Nepal has guaranteed a federal, inclusive, secular and republican state and ensured fundamental and human rights including the economic-social and cultural rights of the people.

Immediately after the promulgation of the constitution, Nepal's southern neighbour India imposed an unofficial trade and transport embargo. It 'noted' but did not welcome the adoption of a constitution by Nepal. This 'big brother' and interventionist attitude is highly objectionable and unwelcome. That too when the Nepalese government has agreed to consider the genuine issues being raised by the agitating political parties and social groups, and to democratically revise the constitution.

The undeclared blockade imposed by India on all goods at the Indo-Nepal border has led to severe difficulties for the common people of Nepal to go about their normal lives. This act of collective punishment is deplorable and it is totally against the concept of a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) 2004; and other agreements such as Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950; Motor Vehicle Agreement among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) 2015; Convention on Transit Trade of Landlocked States (1965) and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We deplore the Government of India's arm-twisting tactics and we further demand that the Government of India stop punishing the common people of Nepal and immediately withdraw the blockade and make a public commitment not to repeat such an action in the future. It is incumbent upon the Government of India to respect the sovereignty of Nepal and let the Nepali people and the Government of Nepal handle their internal issues amongst themselves and act to promote peace and harmony in the region instead of harassing its neighbours and interfering in their internal matters. ♦

## SAAPE welcomes the promulgation of the new constitution of Nepal and condemns the trade and transport embargo imposed by Indian government on the Indo-Nepal border

Statement by the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), 1 October 2015

THE South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), a regional-level civil society network encompassing all eight countries of South Asia, welcomes the new constitution of Nepal promulgated on 20 September 2015 by an overwhelming majority (90% votes in favour) of Constituent Assembly members. Although we had witnessed several problems during the constitution making process that the Constituent Assembly of Nepal had encountered, we welcome the result that followed the democratic processes during the constitution drafting and finalisation process. In

this context, we express our solidarity with the people of Nepal and the genuine demands of Tharu, Dalit, Women, Janatis and Madhesis, which we urge the government of Nepal, the political parties, and groups that are protesting to settle through peaceful dialogue and by incorporating amendments in the constitution as appropriate.

Nepal has gone through a painful political, socio-economic transition for a genuine change in its society for many years. The 'Comprehensive Peace Accord, 2006' which was held between the state and the then



# The coming of Corbyn

Few political events in recent times have created such a political stir as the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of Britain's Labour Party. *Jeremy Seabrook* explains this extraordinary reaction, especially by the British media.

THE election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party (with 59% of the vote of its members) has already performed one great service to an atrophied political debate in Britain. He has widened the shrunken realm of discussion, which had narrowed into arguments reminiscent of religious disputes between medieval schoolmen whose minute scriptural exegeses were irrelevant to believers. Corbyn has opened up territory on which No Trespassing signs had been erected by a political establishment which lays down the rules of the game, the rituals of a politics designed to resist all serious challenges to wealth and power.

Whatever Corbyn's fate – whether he becomes Prime Minister, proves 'unelectable', as the press virtually unanimously declares, or withdraws before the election of 2020 – he is already owed a debt of gratitude by all who defy the institutionalised conservatism of a somnolent Labour Party.

Jeremy Corbyn, modest and inexperienced in the braying art of leadership favoured by the Conservatives, showed up the hollow rhetoric of the Labour elite, its timid respectability and poverty of imagination. The other contenders in the leadership contest invoked their 'principles' and 'passion' and, at the same time, their 'realism' in recognising that you couldn't do anything for the weak and vulnerable until you had gained power; even though to acquire that power you have to jettison all principles.

It was inevitable that the media would seek to destroy him. There had, after all, been two precedents in the recent past. Firstly, when Natalie Bennett's Green Party showed a surge



Jeremy Corbyn, newly elected leader of the British Labour Party.

of popularity, and secondly, when Nigel Farage of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) threatened to undermine the vote of both 'mainstream' parties. Bennett, with her 'honking voice and strident opinions', a 'bombastic blonde Australian', was described as offering 'hard-Left' policies, a desire to ban the monarchy and the House of Lords and much of the armed services and make illegal fur and 'cruel foods' like foie gras. She would make it easier to join Islamic terror groups. She gave a TV interview described as a 'car crash', and was called a 'poor media performer', proof that she was 'not up to the job'.

Similarly, Farage was represented as a phony, projecting himself as an ordinary bloke in the pub with his pint and forbidden cigarette, in spite of his private education and even more private fortune. This was calculated to expose him to ridicule and therefore to electoral oblivion. In a curious reversion to an archaic attribution of human character to the 'humours' of Hippocrates, he was said to be full of 'bile' and 'spleen'; he was 'dyspeptic' and 'rancorous'. His image as man of the people was further undermined by his complaint that, despite a household income of £109,000 a year (as well as a £60,000 chauffeur allowance

and media appearances worth over £45,000), he was nevertheless 'the poorest person I know in politics'. He was called homophobic for referring to gays as 'fags', sexist and racist, and had spoken of 'Muslim ghettos which were no-go areas for the police and operate under sharia law'.

In spite of this systematic demolition, Farage's UKIP received 13% of the popular vote in the 2015 election, while the Greens achieved 4%. Although a flawed electoral system yielded a single MP for each party, the onslaught of media and ruling elite failed to wipe out the confidence which a proportion of the British public placed in these – apparently ridiculous and unelectable – figures.

How much more severe the censure when Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition voted as leader a man who had always been a thorn in the side of Labour governments, a radical pacifist, a man who publicly said he wanted to abandon the fiction of Britain's 'independent' deterrent. It is a savage irony that Corbyn's name was only placed on the leadership ballot by certain Labour MPs who were alarmed at the reduced prospectus on offer. It was something of a game to widen the range of opinion among aspirants and to initiate debate. Only at the last minute were enough MPs – by no means all supporters of Corbyn – persuaded to set their names to what was intended as cosmetic extension of discussions that would never take place.

And if the media had had their way, they would not. One of the less controllable features of the modern world is that public opinion, that hitherto malleable putty-like substance, to be shaped at will by a few newspaper



**The Labour Party conference in September. 'Whatever Corbyn's fate... he is already owed a debt of gratitude by all who defy the institutionalised conservatism of a somnolent Labour Party.'**

owners and their paid 'opinion-formers' in the interests of the globally powerful, has been modified by the existence of social media. These have become a technological version of that word of mouth which, a century ago, permitted the Labour Party to emerge from the limited traditional straitjacket of a politics that saw Liberals and Conservatives as sole participants.

If the media were insulting to Farage and Bennett, they reached a paroxysm in their vitriol against Corbyn, even before he had been elected. He was leading the 'loony Left' and at the same time the 'hard Left', his supporters were 'adolescent thugs', 'hordes', 'an alien brood', 'insurrectionists'. The Labour Party had been 'captured' by extremists who would reduce Britain to Zimbabwe and 'the politics of the past'. Corbyn was a ' Hamas lover', he would endanger the security of the nation. His ideas were 'crackpot' and 'dangerous'. He is 'economically illiterate' (a curious charge this, coming from those whose competence led to the global financial crisis) and a traitor, since he would 'betray the armed services'. Even his bicycle was called 'a Mao-bike'. The *Daily Mail* ran a horror story, an account of three years of a Corbyn government in 2023. It paints a Britain reduced to Greek-style borrowing, money flooding out of London, property prices in freefall as

Russian oligarchs and the international rich quit ('British Airways reported record ticket sales on first-class flights out of London'); a Britain subjected to power blackouts, a siege economy, hyper-inflation, disorder on the streets, riots and families living under curfew.

It was relentless. In Corbyn's first days as leader, the media accused him of failing to sing the national anthem during the commemorative service for the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. As Opposition leader, it was automatically assumed he would become a member of the Privy Council, a body of 'advisers' to the monarch – clergy, royalty, former ministers and aristocratic luminaries who still ornament British social life. They must take an oath of silence which dates from the 13th century ('keep secret all matters committed and revealed to you'). Corbyn did not attend the first meeting of the Council, and this was interpreted as a 'snub' to the Queen. He had a prior engagement, which turned out to be a walking holiday in Scotland; although when current Prime Minister David Cameron became leader of the Opposition, he attended no Privy Council meeting for three months; and his 'loyalty' was not called into question.

Corbyn was asked whether he would wear a 'white poppy' on Armistice Day, whether he would abandon 'our' nuclear deterrent; and when

he said he could not imagine himself pressing the button, this was tantamount to surrendering the country to anyone who cared to take it over.

### **'Beating the bounds'**

All this recalled the ancient English custom of 'beating the bounds' of a parish in order to reassert its limits, now a quaint archaic ritual. Children would follow the parish priest, striking the outer landmarks

with green boughs of willow or birch, and the priest would say, 'Cursed is he who transgresseth the bounds ... of his neighbours.' Such practices have not fallen into disuse, although no longer directed against a land-grab by neighbouring parishes or covetous landlords. The terrain now most rigorously policed and guarded is political, and this epic work of containment employs thousands of people. The contemporary media are the equivalent of the ecclesiastical court, which adjudicated claims of trespass and the alienation of more material lands.

The fear of these custodians of electability, the beaters of the bounds of democratic propriety, has, in little more than two years, expressed itself in intemperate efforts to shame or undermine alternatives, on both the Right and Left. Democracy is clearly a stunted concept in its heartland: from the Mother of Parliaments now issues a very muted clash of ideas.

In its way, it demonstrates once more the 'lessons' of Greece, namely, that when the electorate votes the wrong way, this can easily be reversed. This should not astonish us. After all, we recently witnessed the prolonged immorality-play of the ruling Syriza party's doomed attempt to protect the poor of Greece from the vengeful policies of the European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank. After all the breathless, down-to-the-wire



rhetoric, the last-minute ‘compromises’, how much energy and effort (not to mention money) has been expended on pulling the wayward Greeks into line? Corbyn has been associated with these same ‘losers’ and ‘no-hopers’; a risk to ‘financial stability’ with his ruinous idealism.

The Conservative victory in 2015, paltry and opportunistic though it was, has become a ‘mandate’, endorsement of a newly arrogant Conservative Party, which has set the tone for the kind of country we are supposed to live in. (At his party conference, Cameron called Corbyn ‘security-threatening, terrorist-sympathising, Britain-hating’.) Efforts to outlaw even the most modest questioning of the existing political order show whose voices are actually speaking through the dutiful echolalia of most ‘commentators’, ‘observers’ and authoritative conveyors of ‘messages’ acceptable to the great landlords of knowledge.

They have dug up skeletons of the 1980s from the shallow graves in which Michael Foot, ‘entryism’ and Leftist ‘takeovers’ were interred, invoking the Communist Party of Great Britain – that shrunken and powerless rump of nostalgics – as though this were representative of a world-conspiracy to bring down democracy, with Corbyn its stalking-horse. The revivalism of this anti-Left pathology is faded; a savourless taste, an odour of damaged goods, a scarecrow in a landscape which even the crows have abandoned. ‘Entryism’ is an unconvincing fable in countries where the Left is supposed to have been definitively routed for all time.

There is a disproportion in the extravagant and blood-curdling rhetoric employed to diminish Corbyn, as though he – and not war, a global refugee crisis, disease, inequality, ISIL, terror, drugs, global warming and mass migration into city slums – were the greatest danger facing the world. It is a measure of our parochialism in the presence of the real threats to the planet. Any challenge to the comfortable politics of alternation between what are labelled ‘centre-Right’ and ‘centre-Left’ is regarded as an unac-



‘[The media] reached a paroxysm in their vitriol against Corbyn...’

ceptable disturbance of our way of life, even when the prevailing order plunges people into poverty, cuts incomes, creates homelessness, punishes the poor and reduces prospects for the next generation. A party that would leave financial institutions, transnational companies and the global rich to their continuous attrition of the civilities and amenities of public life, transforming tax into a voluntary alms-giving, destroying welfare, increasing surveillance, widening inequalities and overheating the social as well as the meteorological climate, would retain ‘credibility’ and show itself worthy of power (or is it impotence?) once more.

The moderation, reason, good sense and humanity of Jeremy Corbyn must be shown as a rapacious assault

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**There is a disproportion in the extravagant and blood-curdling rhetoric employed to diminish Corbyn, as though he were the greatest danger facing the world.**

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on all we hold dear. All the artful devices of power have been employed by the sightless visionaries of the ‘real world’ to castigate the extreme and outlandish, embodied in a humane 66-

year-old, demanding that he repudiate any vestigial ‘Marxist’ beliefs, and avoid splits and divisions in a Labour Party always anxious to distance itself from a radicalism it is bound to deny once more – particularly now that ‘radicalism’ has taken on quite other connotations than a serious questioning of the roots of social and economic injustice, and has been transformed in the lexicon of power into advocacy of violence.

The ritual of beating the bounds of discourse in the reduced parish that is Britain never ceases. But most of the time it remains in the background, a solemn if constant reminder of what may not be said, in a world of blue skies, pushed envelopes and thinking the unthinkable. The mainly young people who affiliated themselves to the Labour Party did so to elect someone whose ‘extremism’ turns out to be a few simple questions: Why, if the Bank of England can create £375 billion in phantom money to give to the banks, can it not do the same for infrastructural projects and popular empowerment? Against whom could we imagine launching our nuclear ‘deterrent’? Why should we fatalistically accept that inequality is as unbiddable as a force of nature? Why have hope and idealism been banished from the parched political landscapes of contemporary Britain? ◆

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The Venezuelan-Chilean poet, jurist, philosopher, philologist and educator, *Andres Bello* (1781-1865), who served the cause of South American independence, also extolled the natural beauty of the continent in his poetry, exemplified by the following poem about the Bio-Bio river in Chile.

### To the Bio-Bio

*Andres Bello*

Blest were he, O Bio-Bio!  
Who could dwell forevermore  
In a deep grove, cool and shady,  
Upon thine enchanted shore!

Just a lowly thatched-roofed  
cottage  
Where thy limpid waters are seen  
Pouring their calm flood in silence  
Amid foliage fresh and green;

Where, instead of shifting changes  
In the fickle things of state,  
Wind-stirred oaks and maitens  
murmur,  
And the forest peace is great;

Where the bird amid the branches,  
In the early dawning gray,  
Sings its untaught, artless music,  
Greeting thus the new-born day.

In that humble thatched-roof  
cottage,  
Oh, how happy were my lot,  
In the peace that nothing troubles,  
Envied not and envying not!

This to me in truth were sweeter  
Than the Babel wild and loud  
Where in chase of a chimera  
All are rushing in a crowd;

Where dark treachery and falsehood  
Near the quaking altar stay  
That the people's favour raises  
To the idols of a day.

Sweet repose, most blissful quiet,  
Earthly paradise divine!  
Has the palm of war or wisdom  
Worth which can outrival thine?

Truth I love, not adulation —  
Truth all unadorned and plain,  
Not the clamorous applauses  
That are raised in Fortune's train.

Growing old, for that false treasure  
I would cease my soul to fret —  
Say 'Farewell to disappointments!  
The forgetful I forget.

'Others call excitement pleasure,  
Madly seeking fame or pelf;  
I in earth's most hidden corner  
Wish to live now for myself.'

*Third World Gallery*

Along the banks of the Nile: a village near Daraw, Egypt.

Credit: Amedeo Vergani