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## Land, Water and Tourism in Aitutaki, Cook Islands

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### Introduction\*

Most island governments in the South Pacific have placed a great deal of faith in a continued annual increase in numbers of tourists as a guarantee of national economic growth. This is particularly the case in the Cook Islands. The response by local, mostly small-scale entrepreneurs has been to invest in the building of tourist accommodation, not only on the main island of Rarotonga, but also on the island of Aitutaki. Until recently the piecemeal development of accommodation on that island has occurred with little reference to the impact on the environment.

Aitutaki is an atoll of volcanic origin in the Southern Cook Islands, located 259 kilometres north of the main island, Rarotonga. It is higher than most atolls, having Maungapu, a 127 m. hill of old coral in the centre. The island is renowned for the beautiful lagoon, which has a number of uninhabited islets within the reef which encloses the lagoon. The surge in building on Aitutaki has been in response to the Cook Island Government's "push" for tourism development. It is also due to optimism on the part of the accommodation proprietors that, if well-promoted, Aitutaki will have a significant increase in tourist numbers. Most visitors fly to the island for the day (Monday to Saturday) from Rarotonga to take a cruise. They visit some of the islets and snorkel over coral heads which are well populated with fish and, sometimes, turtles.

The Aitutaki Island Council has approved a permit for the building of a new "luxury" hotel, to be sited in part of the Aitutaki lagoon, on the grounds that this enterprise would provide jobs for island residents. There is local concern regarding the impact of this development on fish breeding stocks. There is also strong local concern about the removal of a great deal of land on the island from local ownership and access because of the recent surge in the building of tourist accommodation. Aitutaki people are also apprehensive about the possible impact of increased tourist numbers on the island's infrastructure, particularly on the power and water supplies. The supply of piped water to village households is regularly cut off without warning, partly due to a decrease in water levels in the collection galleries and partly due to the failure of pumping facilities. The Aitutaki community is representative of many small island communities worldwide which, in responding to what they believe to be central government wishes and prompts, may ultimately experience serious economic, environmental and social problems.

### "Resortland"

I have recently arrived back from outer space. Or I might as well have, given that I've been deliberately marooned on a tropical island for the past week, with nothing more to intrude upon my idling mind than the lapping waves against the sand, the clank of rigging against the mast of a yacht moored offshore, and the odd, distant, delighted cry of a child playing in the hotel pool. Yes, it's been hell, but someone has to do it.

I call this place Resortland. It can be anywhere, really, so long as the climate or the landscape or both are conducive to the leisure pursuits of the mobile middle classes. In Resortland there are few clues to your actual location, in the cartographical sense ... it's an international style of marble and chrome and hardwoods and ceiling fans and palm trees and pool bars and swizzle sticks that could be anywhere from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean to the Pacific to South-East Asia and beyond (Macdonald, 2004:C10).

This advertorial style of travel writing commonly appears in New Zealand and Australian daily newspapers as well as in televised travel programmes. The glamorous views of "Resortland" are an important focus for sales by travel agencies to people for whom a hedonistic experience on a tropical island is only the swipe of a credit card away. What was once available only for the rich is now been democratized and the islands of the South Pacific are now competitively marketed as accessible and safe destinations, whether for land tourists or cruise ship passengers.

The islands and their peoples, however, have to provide the playground facilities - the land for the resorts, the water for the swimming pools, the disposal facilities for the sewage and the rubbish, as well as present easily understood displays of local culture. On the positive side they receive a contribution to the national GDP and a proportion of the population have full- and part-time work. However, simultaneously the governments of what are termed Small Island Developing States (SIDS) by the United Nations are also recipients of messages from supra-government agencies such as those of the United Nations Environment Network (UNEP) and the UN Programme for Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (United Nations, 2005), that they should develop a policy of sustainable development. (See Appendix 1 of this paper).

There are inherent tensions and contradictions in the current emphasis on what has become a somewhat idealized if not fetterized concept, that of sustainable development. The question asked, but not necessarily answered, is this:

Can the concepts of sustainable development, incorporating the protection of island environments, including the conservation of land, of ground water supplies and of island seascapes, be maintained while South Pacific nations such as the Cook Islands simultaneously aim to increase their GDP and local levels of employment by the ongoing expansion of tourism?

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\* Any errors in this paper are my own and not those of people who were kind enough to share information with me. Thanks to the Cook Islands Prime Minister's Office for permission to research in the Cook Islands, and to Queen Manarangi Tutai Ariki and Des Clarke, Vaipae, Aitutaki; Papa Taituria, Papa Tikaka Henry, Messrs. Ron Maki, Putangi Mose Jnr., Rey Puupii, Bobby Bishop, all of Aituaki; Peter Mason, NIWA, Christchurch.

In a speech made in June 2004, Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated that tourism and its contribution to the economies of SIDS are threatened by overdevelopment, pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change and beach erosion (Annan, 2004). Cook Islands' politicians, bureaucrats and members of the general population have recognized that their nation is not exempt from these threats. One suggestion for the achievement of sustainable development, currently being promoted in the Cook Islands, is the development of a "better" type of tourism such as eco- and "geo-tourism"; including the provision of local, less luxurious accommodation and village home-stay accommodation.

The main proponent of "Geotourism" (also known as "Ethnic tourism" or "Cultural tourism" in the academic tourism literature) is Dr. Peter Phillips, who is employed as a consultant by the Cook Island Tourism Corporation. In an interview for Radio Australia's Pacific Beat in August 2004 Dr. Phillips described what the term involved. He said that this style of tourism, espoused by the publishers of National Geographic as a way of protecting local environments, would appeal to "interactive travelers" (see Burnford 2004:1). Such people, he said, did not want the "rest and recreation mode" offered by resorts, but were interested in experiencing and learning about "the full range of the local", including flora, fauna, architecture, crafts, cuisine and cultural performances. He describes the concept in more detail in the first report of the findings from consultations with people on ten of the Cook Islands in May, 2004 (Phillips 2004:3-4).

There are wealthy travellers who would be interested in geotourism experiences. However, on the whole, this concept does not fit with the increase in the building of luxurious, over-water accommodation units in resorts in Pacific island groups, and in other island nations. This type of resort was once mainly available for very wealthy people in island groups such as the Maldives and on an island in the Straits of Malacca in Malaysia.<sup>1</sup> Now they are common. First established in the South Pacific on the island of Bora Bora in Tahiti, these resorts have been built in Vanuatu, most recently in New Caledonia (Coral Palms Island Resort), and one is planned for Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. A holiday at one of these resorts is now within the financial reach of many people in Australia and in New Zealand.

### Experts afloat in the Pacific (and drifting past each other)

The information outlined below will not come as a surprise to anyone with an interest in environmental issues in small Pacific islands nations. There are a range of experts such as meteorologists, hydrologists, environmentalists, agronomists, disaster experts and development planners, both indigenous and expatriate, who work in the Pacific and who could contribute part of the narrative. Our interests are similar in that we wish to enable people to have a better quality of life. However, people like myself, an anthropologist, do not often meet with these specialists.

We may just miss each other as we visit island communities for field research. The experts also do not necessarily meet with each other unless they are employed by the same organisation or regularly participate in international conferences. There are other individuals who have contributed to the present situation, including the foreign economists who advised the Cook Islands Government to undertake drastic economic reforms in 1995. A number of consultants have written reports on the economic possibilities of increased tourism in that nation<sup>2</sup> and there have been a variety of other consultants, funded by foreign aid programmes to do a variety of assessments. Again, we do not meet each other except perhaps at conferences or as our paths accidentally cross during our stay in the islands. Then there are the Cook Islanders themselves, both expatriate and resident, many of whom hope and plan for an economically viable future life for themselves and their families on their home islands.

Local issues with the inadequacies of the water supply were not the anticipated beginning point of a period of field research in the Cook Islands in February to April, 2004. I had gone there primarily to observe tourist development on Aitutaki. I had chosen Aitutaki as my base because people from that island who live in Hamilton, New Zealand, had concerns about the rumours of the proposed construction of a luxury over-water hotel, known at the time as the "Captain Cook Hotel", adjacent to a wetland area which runs parallel to the first airport runway.<sup>3</sup> The lagoon waters that would front the hotel are not suitable for swimming and are part of an area on which a local protection order (*rahui*) was placed to enable fish stocks to regenerate. The plan would involve part of the lagoon being dredged to deepen the water level.

There has been a tendency in tourism planning worldwide to assume that tourism is a "good" which will directly or indirectly benefit most of the residents of the favoured community. In the case of Aitutaki a very small portion of the population derive their main source of income from tourism, as owners of accommodation; as suppliers of goods, such as the owners of grocery shops, souvenir shops and mixed businesses; suppliers of services such as cruise and other boats and the hiring of cars and mopeds; as proprietors of bars and cafes; or as employees of these businesses. A slightly larger group of people, including families with children, earn small amounts of money as part-time entertainers, performing in dance troupes or in string bands. A small number of men sell fish and seasonally grown vegetables to the hotels and restaurants. The remainder of the population are dependent on income derived from Government employment, on subsistence agriculture, and on remittances from family members in Australia and New Zealand.

### Tourism in the Cook Islands

<sup>1</sup> Kurosawa, Susan, "Hydro Therapy", Weekend Australian, May 22-23, 2004, Travel Section, p.1. She writes: "Over, in, on – no matter the description, this is the tropic resort world's most coveted accommodation. Distilled to its bare (thatched, fan-cooled, super-comfy) basics, the overwater bungalow does not, as the description suggests, loom over the water, but crouches lightly in it, on stilts. The bungalow could be a villa, a *bure*, a *fare*, or a *fale*, depending which particular satellite of paradise you are in. ... the illusion is of semi-isolation, the lagoon as a boundless ensuite pool".

<sup>2</sup> "Elements of the [Cook Island Tourism] Masterplan were implemented directly by the Tourist Authority under assistance provided by the then NZODA [New Zealand Official Development Assistance, the New Zealand Agency for International Development] Tourism Masterplan Implementation Programme". The Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, "Tourism Master Plan Update", *Drumbeats*, May/June, 2004, p.7.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Tim Tepaki, the entrepreneur, has been reported as saying that the Cook Island market had to expand to incorporate more luxury standard accommodation which would be available for \$500-1500 a night. "...Tepaki perceived Aitutaki to be the jewel in the scheme of future development ... You've got to have the best to offer". The Cook Islands Independent, Issue 84, February 14, 2004, p.3.

In 1995 the Cook Islands already had a large tourism sector and it was emphasised that the expansion of this sector was essential for the economic survival of the nation. Continued expansion occurred during the past decade. In 2003 78,328 people visited the Cook Islands (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation website, sub-section "Statistics"). In December 2003 the Government reported that:

The tourism industry has led the growth of the Cook Islands economy for the past 20 years with an average growth in visitor arrivals for the period 1987 to 2000 of 6.3% and contribution to GDP for the same period increasing from 27% to 51%. Tourism revenues have grown in nominal terms from \$20 million in 1997 to over \$81 million in 2000 (Government of the Cook Islands, 2003a:31)

Following an extensive consultation process with members of communities in ten of the Cook Islands it has been concluded that:

...there is no clear vision for the future of tourism in this country ... we have had what the National Geographic Society calls 'destination style drift' towards being a 'rest and recreation' destination which is hard for the outsider to tell from any other white sand and palm tree place in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, or Caribbean....the recommendation from the consultation phase is that we need to focus our efforts on developing a style of tourism that sustains and enhances the well being of resident Cook Islanders and their environment, culture and heritage (Cook Island Tourism Corporation 2004:1).

Concern was expressed during the Cook Islands 1st National Development Forum held in November 2003 regarding the disproportionate amount of foreign owned businesses. in the country, particularly in Rarotonga. In the nine years since 1996 45 per cent of the businesses registered with the Cook Islands Development Investment Board had foreign investors (Government of the Cook Islands, 2004a:10). Further, "65 per cent of accredited resorts and self catering accommodation on Rarotonga are owned by foreign interests" (Government of the Cook Islands, 2004a:10). The effect of this, combined with substantial out-migration from 1995 onwards, has caused a significant erosion of the indigenous (Maori) culture.

The lack of an environmental strategy linked to tourism development was criticised during sessions of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation-sponsored Cook Islands Tourism Forum, held in Rarotonga, 3-4 December 2002. A staff member of the Cook Islands' Government Environment Service stated: "The reality is that while many people talk about conserving the environment we face major difficulty in achieving compliance". He blamed "The absence of regulations, ignoring of strategies such as the Tourism Master Plan, National Environmental Management Strategy 1994, and the Rarotonga Environment Act 1994" (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation 2003:77-78).

Environmental matters have become subject to greater regulation in the Cook Islands since November 19, 2003 when the Cook Islands Government brought into law an Environment Act. This Act gives greater powers to the Island Environment Officers who work in conjunction with local committees, the Island Environment Authorities as well as Island Councils. A requirement of this Act is that any developer applying for a permit will have to obtain an environmental impact assessment report. Plans for resort developments are also displayed in government offices to enable members of the public to see them and lodge objections.

In 1995 the Cook Islands government restructured the public service by halving the number of employees. This action was in response to the recommendations of foreign economic consultants that there was an urgent need for financial reform. At the time it was anticipated that some of the public servants who had been made redundant would, following a government-sponsored transition programme, become small business proprietors, perhaps particularly becoming involved in tourism ventures. Some did, but many emigrated with their families to New Zealand and to Australia. The population decreased by approximately 16 per cent. In 2001 the population was 14,990, with 63 per cent of the population classed as "urban".

Income in the form of remittances and gifting in cash and kind from expatriate Cook Islanders is important for the national economy.. The government also receives aid funding from, among other countries, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, The People's Republic of China, France, the Asia Development Bank and the European Commission.

### **Aitutaki**

Aitutaki has a resident population of around 1400. Many former residents live and work in Rarotonga or in Australia or New Zealand. Most of the island households maintain strong links with expatriate members of their families overseas. In 2004 "mature" tourist accommodation was available on the island in the form of two "luxury" hotels and a "luxury" resort. The older of the two hotels, the Aitutaki Resort and Spa, was built twenty years ago and has eight bungalows with part of their verandas built over the waters of the lagoon. In 2004 these cost visitors \$1590 per night, but other bungalows on the property are about a third of this.

There are twenty businesses offering six to eighteen self-contained accommodation units, variously termed "lodges", "villas" or "bungalows", in a price range from \$30-\$200 per night. Most such units have fans and solar water heaters, and the more expensive have air-conditioning. Some of the small tourist properties have composting toilets and rain water tanks. Although the usual tourist facilities, such as cafes, are few, Aitutaki clearly gives tourists a high level of aesthetic and experiential satisfaction. A search for Aitutaki via Google found many tourist "blogs" describing people's experiences. I also found high levels of satisfaction in fifty interviews which I had with visiting tourists.

Most of the small scale tourism accommodation businesses are owned and managed by a husband and wife, who employ one or two workers as cleaners. At least one of each of these partners was born on Aitutaki; several of the spouses are from New Zealand, Australia, or in one case, Tonga. The oldest of these businesses, a guest house, was established twenty-four years ago and the second oldest eighteen years ago. In both these cases the business of renting accommodation began almost accidentally in that it seemed logical to do this during the periods the houses were not being used by their owners who were living and working in New Zealand.

In 2003/2004 approvals were granted for the building of three new complexes. Two of these comprised twelve stand-alone units, with eight stand alone units in another. The quality and aesthetic appeal of these constructions varied. The new constructions are comprised of clusters of small, detached buildings which are located on sites fronting or close to the lagoon. Two of these sets of units have the

appearance of sheds or garages, as do a number located on other sites. That is, they are rectangular, with small windows and fronted by a verandah.

The builders of the newer accommodation on Aitutaki have invested large amounts of money because of their belief that there will be a continuous increase in the number of tourists visiting Aitutaki. This view was optimistic in that in 2004 the daily occupancy rate was quite low (30-40 per cent). The low occupancy rate was attributed by some proprietors to the fact that there are well-patronised day trips for tourists who are flown over from Rarotonga to cruise and snorkel in the lagoon. Nevertheless, there is a steady flow of visitors who stay for three to five days. However, this flow is seasonal and there is local speculation that many of the new developments may often be empty. However, in late 2003 the then Prime Minister, Robert Woonton, during the opening of the Aitutaki airport runway extension, predicted that large-capacity planes would soon be landing there carrying large numbers of tourists travelling direct from the U.S.A. and Canada.

The piecemeal development of accommodation on Aitutaki has, until recently, occurred with little reference to environmental issues, including the protection of the coastal landscapes, maintenance of the quality of the water in the lagoon and the capacity of the local water supply. In 2003 the Aitutaki Island Council approved the permit for the new luxury hotel on the grounds that such a hotel would provide jobs for island residents. This is questionable as many of the residents in the employable age group live either in Rarotonga or overseas.

### Water and land issues

It is water – the lagoon – which attracts tourists to Aitutaki. The lagoon offers many recreational opportunities, including sailing, fishing, snorkelling and simply relaxing, while looking at the ever changing vistas. However, it is fresh water, or lack of it, that has caused local concern about the impact of increased tourist numbers on the island's infrastructure, particularly on the water supply. Many members of the population have worked and lived in New Zealand and in Australia. They live in modern style bungalows and have become used to having indoor bathrooms and constant supplies of water. In 2003 there was a well publicised campaign by the Ministry for Sustainable Development and the Environment to encourage household members to conserve water.

Many households on Aitutaki have rain water collection tanks and a Canadian aid-funded scheme is in the offing which will involve assisting others to obtain tanks. At present the water which is piped, free of charge, to island households, most of which have flush toilets and showers, is drawn from collection galleries 290 metres long in an area known as Vaipeka. The collection galleries contain accumulated seepage of groundwater from the hills behind them. The water is pumped to three large water tanks and then piped to households. The water tanks were built with Australian government aid in the 1980s and 1990s and the Vaipeka galleries were renovated and extended in the 1990s also with funding from AUSAID. Most owner/builders of tourist accommodation have large rainwater tanks with pumps to supply the bungalows/units, but some have also built their own wells to tap into and pump out supplies of groundwater. Some of these businesses also utilise the free piped water.

Up until May 23, 2004 there had been no public meeting of Aitutaki people to enable them to discuss the implications of the accelerated building program or the possibility of one or even other luxury hotels being constructed in the near future. There was a groundswell of dissent but this tended to be expressed in private conversations. (see Cowling 2005, in press). There was particular concern about the way in which family leaseholds have been purchased and sometimes sold on to investors, both Cook Island and foreign. Extended family land holdings, including sites on the islets in the lagoon, vary in size. The smallest is about quarter of an acre, and they are often dispersed in different locations on the island.

Land is currently used for house-lots and for agriculture, although many hectares are currently uncultivated because the owners live overseas. Fallowing is also practised. Officially and traditionally, land cannot be sold. Pieces of land, ranging in size from half-an-acre to several acres can be leased to a family or non-family member for sixty years, provided a majority of the members of an extended family [kainga] who live on the island agree. Aitutaki residents can represent non-resident land owners living in say, Australia or New Zealand, in this process. The would-be lessee has to state whether the intended use of the land is for building a house or for agricultural or commercial purposes. The former is the most common form of land transfer. The lease can be reviewed within five or fifteen years. Originally, the payment by a resident of Aitutaki for such a lease was \$1.00 per annum, but it is understood that outsiders would pay more.

Many expatriate Cook Islanders hope, at some time, to retire and return home. A number of partially built homes which can be seen on Aitutaki are testament to this hope. As families accumulate savings they arrange for containers of building materials to be delivered to the island and then spend a short period on the island supervising the construction. A few of the guest houses on Aitutaki were built by the owners in this way and were then turned into budget accommodation for tourists.

### Conclusion

People can hardly be blamed for wanting to remain in their home islands and earn a living and tourism ventures have seemed to be a viable way of doing so. The problems inherent in encouraging visits to Aitutaki by greater numbers of tourists have been acknowledged in reports to the Cook Islands Government. Some "rationing" has been suggested, with a figure of 500 per day perceived as the maximum appropriate for visitors staying overnight in accommodation on Aitutaki (Rey Puapui, Aitutaki Tourism Officer, *pers. comm.* March 2004).

The local concerns about the alienation of land have been noted by Government agencies. The Economic Focus Group in November 2003 when reporting their findings to the 1st National Development Forum noted that there was "Continuing uncertainty and tensions over land, especially on Rarotonga and Aitutaki" (Government of the Cook Islands, 2003c:2-8). The Law and Governance Focus Group reported that "Land issues have become critical with more Cook Islanders becoming disenfranchised from their land". Additionally, this Group reported that "Disparity will continue to grow between Rarotonga and the Outer Islands and within the Outer Islands with continued division amongst decision makers on matters such as traditional titles, religion and sport, affecting the cooperative effects of governance. The Infrastructure Group reported that that the supply of accessible safe water was inadequate.

An ideal picture of the future has been articulated by planners and politicians in the Cook Islands in their recent discussions, together with a long list of priorities. (Government of the Cook Islands 2003c). However, it seems unlikely, given the shaky start of a coalition

of politicians in a “Government of National Unity” in November 2004, that sufficient and speedy action will be taken in the near future in the ways in which many people would wish.

The promotion of geotourism may or may not assist the small business owners of Aitutaki. Perhaps it may generate assistance to encourage and enable local people to restore aspects of the island’s environment, including wetland areas, and slow the pollution and despoliation of the lagoon. It is clear that the local people should be kept better informed by the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation and the Island Council on decisions being made about tourism ventures, such as the proposed luxury hotel, rather than reading the news in the Cook Island newspapers or sharing misinformation in the local stores. This may help persuade them to see the possible benefits of tourism for all. They would need a guarantee of government support (such as improving water supply) to ensure their quality of life will not be impaired. Any degree of commitment however, will be affected by the fact that many local people have the option of (regretfully) leaving the island (for Rarotonga) and the Cook Islands for countries such as New Zealand on a short and long term basis. In the meantime travel agents, airlines and tourism accommodation proprietors continue to promote the Cook Islands, including Aitutaki, as a destination which offer leisure and luxury and as places which are not far away from an earthly paradise

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## Appendix 1:

United Nations, “Making tourism more sustainable”: Small Islands Stakes, Press Release #2, International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005, [www.un.org/smallislands2005](http://www.un.org/smallislands2005).

Islands are a natural attraction for tourists, and this in turn generates jobs and much-needed revenue. But the tourism industry has reached such a scale that it endangers those very ecosystems and cultures that attract tourists.

Tourism needs to be made more sustainable, to better benefit small island nations while protecting their culture and traditions, and to effectively conserve and manage freshwater and other natural resources. The continuing challenge for small islands is to establish the appropriate balance between tourism development and that of other sectors of the economy, given the limits of their carrying capacity and the fact that the tourism sector places demands on other sectors of the economy. The impact of tourism on the economy of small islands depends on the proportion of funds that are retained within the local economy. Small islands see the best ways to maximize their own economic gains, given that their tourism industries are often dominated by foreign companies.

Tourism is also sensitive to external shocks, as shown by the reduction in the numbers of tourists, and the revenues they provide to SIDS, following the terrorist attacks against New York and Bali, and during the SARS health crisis in 2003.

## The Panya Dilemma: Reconciling Tourism-Induced Cultural Change and Empowerment in a Tibetan Host Community

Kelly Dombroski

### Introduction

Tourism has long been critiqued as an imperialist and neo-colonialist force that systematically destroys culture by incorporating previously independent communities into the global capitalist system. The arrival of tourists is thought to mark the beginning of a cycle that involves the commoditisation and consumption of a culture through to its ultimate absorption into the world system and subsequent rejection as an authentic tourism destination<sup>1</sup>. Some enlightened travellers try to avoid this kind of cycle by insisting on small-scale authentic travel experiences that benefit communities and do not harm the environment – hence the arrival of ‘community-based ecotourism’, the ethical way to travel the world and help the poor. Yet community-based ecotourism sometimes conceptualises indigenous communities as fragile cultural relics that need to be preserved and protected from the rest of the world, to be accessed only by the initiated few, who have the cultural capital to understand and consume this experience in the proper light.

The problems with this kind of conceptualisation are striking. Firstly, the concept of ‘community’ as a unit of discussion can only really be applied to individual communities as delineated by their own members – hence it is not really a valid unit of discussion at the general level (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Secondly, Butler’s conceptualisation of tourism as a boom and bust cycle cannot be applied necessarily to all situations of tourism, providing regulation of the tourism site and flows is sufficient (Weaver 2000). Thirdly, it cannot be assumed that independent tourists have necessarily less impact on culture or the environment, since it is much easier to regulate and control the effects of mass tourists as a group (Dombroski 2004; Weaver 2001). The fourth and most important problem with the cultural preservation conceptualisation is that it fails to acknowledge the importance of individual communities’ freedom of choice and agency.

This paper explores the tensions between agency and cultural change at the conjunction of tourism, development and empowerment in a small community of Tibetans in Western China.<sup>2</sup> Their interaction with tourism development has led to some difficult choices, but choices that they alone have the right to make. The situation of Panya Village demands that tourism and development researchers resist the temptation to reinvent pre-tourism Edens that never existed in fact (to rephrase Manzo 1995: 238). It shows that empowering a group of people is not the same as preserving them, and it shows that indigenous peoples themselves are capable of determining the nature and extent of their interaction with the forces of tourism and development.

### The Community

Panya village is situated within the Jiuzhaigou (nine-village gully) Biosphere Reserve, which is located in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province, China. Jiuzhaigou is listed under the World Heritage, Man and Biosphere and Green Globe 21 programmes, as a site of natural and scenic significance, mostly due to its unusual karst-formed lakes and waterfalls. Jiuzhaigou is managed by a single-purpose government administration bureau with a staff of around 1000. The reserve receives more than one million tourists a year of mostly domestic origin, who are day-only visitors, staying outside the reserve in privately owned hotels. The number of tourists to the reserve has meant that, unlike the characteristically under-funded ‘paper parks’ common in China (Jim and Xu 2003), the Administration has the means both to manage the reserve effectively and to invest in the development of the 1000 indigenous Tibetans who reside inside the reserve.

Panya is generally thought of as one of the least wealthy of the six remaining villages in the reserve, due to its mountainous location away from the main tourist areas, and the lack of guanxi or contacts on the part of the villagers themselves.<sup>3</sup> However, the people of Panya have in general responded well to tourism in their area, and from the early 1980s have supplemented their farming with tourism businesses. The first tourism businesses involved horse and yak rides around a small forest area in the reserve, and the hiring out of Tibetan clothing to tourists for photographs. The women of Panya were among the first to begin hiring clothing to tourists, and one woman claims to have invented the idea. They initially rented out their own clothes, but later found that the tourists preferred brighter clothing. In response they sewed cheaper versions of Tibetan celebration clothing from some unlikely but popular substitutes, replacing brightly coloured but expensive silk with pink-sequinned polyester, and the traditional beaver or leopard fur with fake feather trims.

During the 1980s and 1990s, most of the 350 members of Panya Village moved to Heye Village which is closer to the tourist area, and had been constructed by people from Panya and other upper-mountain villages for housing tourists in large Tibetan-style guesthouses as an extra income earner. However, since 2001 tourist overnight stays have been banned in the reserve, due to the extra pressure on the reserve environment. From this time, all residents in the reserve were compensated for the closing of guesthouses and the disallowing of yak and horse renting activities, regardless of their actual involvement in tourism ventures. In 2001, residents each received ¥3,000 per person; 2002, ¥5,000 per person; 2003, ¥7,000 per person in compensation.<sup>4</sup> Farming within the reserve was also prohibited in 2001, when flooding along the Yangtze River caused the government to implement the ‘Converting Farmland to Forest Project’ in all catchment areas, beginning with those areas such as Jiuzhaigou where residents had other sources of income. Now the main income earners are the women, who continue to rent clothes to tourists, and who also run small businesses such as souvenir stalls. These women have managed to increase their incomes significantly over the last ten years as tourist numbers have increased.

### Using indigenous measurements

<sup>1</sup> See Butler (1980) for a classic example of this kind of argument.

<sup>2</sup> This paper draws on observations and discussions during three months of fieldwork in Western China in 2004, as part of an MPhil thesis in development studies. Methodology involved participatory observation and semi-structured interviews with members of Panya Village, the reserve administration, tourists and reserve residents from other villages.

<sup>3</sup> I was informed of this by the reserve administration. This was later confirmed by the people of Panya, with whom I conducted a wealth ranking exercise.

<sup>4</sup> Conversion rates are fixed RMB ¥8 to US \$1.

Although indigenous knowledges are valued in academic literature, this is often technical knowledge and does not extend to indigenous epistemologies and understandings of well-being. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) point out that although researchers may use indigenous knowledge, the way they interpret indigenous knowledge is still through their own epistemology or understanding of truth, rather than the theories of knowledge that the people themselves use. Obviously, as a researcher who is not indigenous to the Tibetan plateau, I have not interpreted the research data according to a local epistemology, and I am unable to escape my own cultural filter that affects the way I theorise and understand what is true. My own cultural perceptions in the area of wellbeing, which, although not necessarily composed of Western, Modern economic ideas, are not indigenous to Panya either. In order to avoid writing my own cultural perceptions on to the 'field data' as best as possible, I spent most of my time in the field attempting to understand firstly the Panya perception of wellbeing, and secondly, their analysis of the changes to their own wellbeing over the last twenty years since tourists first began visiting. This methodology was largely qualitative and reflexive, involving the use of open ended questions and focus group discussions on the concept of wellbeing, then questioning and discussing changes in wellbeing over time. If open-ended questions gained no response, participants were asked to rank a list of important factors in wellbeing (populated by factors mentioned by previous participants). The following outline of the Panya people's understanding of wellbeing is drawn from these discussions, although of course translated and interpreted using the closest terms in English. Likewise, there were varied answers between groups and individuals, meaning that the following presents a general overview of what was consistently ranked as important to the people of Panya.

All in all, tourism was seen to have resulted in a definite increase in well-being for the people of Panya, according to their own measurements. The people of Panya used three main indicators in judging wellbeing. Firstly, they emphasised the ability to earn a livelihood – considered possible through good health and the physical ability to get a job or work the land. Secondly, they discussed the amount of choice over one's future – especially in terms of the increased choices that education allows. Thirdly, their cultural and family identity was considered an important part of 'living the good life', or having wellbeing, particularly within the community of Panya and the wider community of Jiuzhaigou Tibetans.

### **Livelihoods**

Tourism has improved their livelihoods through both increasing health and increasing access to income in three main ways. Firstly, there is an increased range of employment opportunities, giving much better benefit to time ratio than farming. Job options include those outlined above such as clothes-renting and small souvenir businesses, along with 'environmental protection' (a euphemism for rubbish collection and toilet supervision), bus driving, tour guiding and various administrative positions. Secondly, each household has access to shares in a purpose-built restaurant facility that caters to some 4000 tourists per day (49 percent belongs to locals, 51 percent to the state). Thirdly, each individual, regardless of age or involvement in the pre-2001 guest-house business receives annual compensation. The average income of a person in Nanping County, in which Jiuzhaigou is situated, is ¥1,200 per annum, whereas the average income of a person within the Jiuzhaigou national reserve is ¥18,000 per annum.

### **Choice**

The people of Panya repeatedly used a concept which I will here call "choice" in explaining the changes over the last twenty years. Giving the younger generation the choices the elders never had was a theme that was returned to constantly in discussions of wellbeing, no matter which of the three main generations the participant belonged to. The people of Panya see that tourism has definitely led to increased choice over their lives, especially in terms of career. The discourse of choice was present in all discussions concerning education, which was now attainable due to the increased income from tourism. Locals can afford to send their children away to secondary school and even polytechnic and university; it is thought that the higher the education given to the next generation, the greater the range of options that generation has. Children were generally seen to have a much greater range of opportunities available to them as compared to both the previous generation and their classmates from other neighbouring towns and villages. The current generation of adults had little to no education. Many of them were unable to read and write Tibetan or Mandarin Chinese, and some could not speak Mandarin. This severely limited their opportunities for outside employment, since the dialect spoken in Jiuzhaigou is limited to the immediate area (not more than a 20 kilometre radius from the reserve entrance). This meant that their lives were restricted to the hard life of mountain terraced farming, and more recently, small businesses within the area. The women were especially pleased that their children were able to attend primary and secondary school, and foresaw much greater choice in the lives of their children than they themselves were privilege to. These days there are young people training in such varied areas as tourism, management, sports coordination, teaching (both primary and secondary), forestry and the performing arts – all made possible through the increased incomes brought about through tourism.

Locals with higher education levels could access administrative positions, such as Ze Ren Zhu of the Residents' Management Office, who was the first Panya resident to receive a university education. Other people from within the reserve had gone on to be Japanese-Chinese translators, school teachers and businessmen and women in Sichuan and beyond.

### **Cultural and Family Identity**

Discussions with the people of Panya showed that tourism allowed the revival of their traditional culture in a way that is somewhat typical around China (for example, see Oakes' 1993 outline of tourism in Miao regions). Because of strong anti-traditional sentiment during the Cultural Revolution, many minority peoples came under attack for their 'backward' ways. Religious minorities especially faced persecution. In Jiuzhaigou, the temple was burnt down, and one whole village destroyed<sup>5</sup>. Some landowners and monks were also killed. This dampened the expression of traditional culture, both religious and non-religious. Prior to that, during the great famine of 1958-1961, around 100 people in Panya died – some even consider that this was due to the people not appeasing Chairman Mao, who was by a few individuals considered something of a god or powerful lama due to his perceived ability to control the environment.

The late 1970s saw the end of the Cultural Revolution, and the handover of power to Deng Xiaoping along with the rapid rise in tourism both domestic and international from 1978. Tourist numbers rose in Jiuzhaigou from this time, with people's increasing incomes

<sup>5</sup> The people of Jiuzhaigou are members of the Bon sect of Tibetan Buddhism – actually the religion of the people pre-Lamaism, with some later influence. Monks are allowed to marry and to eat meat; rituals focus around shamanistic-style trance dances and harvest festivals.

contributing to increasing revitalisation of their culture. Prayer flags were put up for every appropriate occasion, the temple was rebuilt, people repainted their houses in traditional Tibetan style, expanding and rebuilding them to accommodate interested tourists. Bonfire dances began in the evenings, both for tourists and their own entertainment. People purchased fabric and had traditional robes made, complete with fur trimmings. Tourists, surprisingly enough for the locals, took an interest in their culture, their clothing and their customs. One young man became famous all over China after his dance and song troupe produced music for sale, including the famous song *Jiu Zhai Zhi Zi* serenading his home, Jiuzhaigou.

In general, the Panya women see tourism as having led to the preservation and even revitalisation of the culture of the local Tibetans in Jiuzhaigou. Although tourism to Jiuzhaigou is not primarily cultural tourism, the people's cultural identity as Tibetans was strengthened through the economic, social and psychological empowerment of the people. Yet when later I asked the women about the biggest changes they had experienced since tourism began to the area, the most common answer was "All our children have become Han".

### **The Hanification of Panya?**

And this is the Panya dilemma. The education of the young people of Panya is a continuing source of pride for the older generation. They have pride that they are able to afford to give their children better opportunities than they themselves had – the opportunity to do something other than the back-breaking farming work of their parents and grandparents. But this blessing has come with a somewhat unexpected curse: all the children have 'become like Han', the majority people group of China to whom we are mostly referring to when we talk of 'the Chinese'.<sup>6</sup> Despite a revitalisation of cultural expression in the older generations, there were several aspects of 'Hanification' they noted in the younger generation.

Firstly, the Hanification shows in many outward things. They dress in 'Han' clothing (basically Western clothing). They listen to Han music. They use cellphones, cut and dye their hair and idolise their favourite Han television stars. They love karaoke and video games, chatting on the internet and going to discos. They speak Mandarin fluently (or at least the regional version of Mandarin), and most of them are bilingual. Secondly, the women claim, there has also been a change in a more inward way. Their thinking is considered different, they have a totally different understanding of life compared with their parents' generation. The women didn't expand on this significantly, but did emphasise that this generation was quite different from their own. They also indicated that this was not exactly even because of tourism, since their children have very little contact with tourists. When in the reserve, they mostly reside in their own village where tourists do not often come, and interactions with tourists are generally avoided by all unless money-making opportunities are present. The reason, it is thought, is that they are receiving increased education. Their education is changing the way they think, making them more Han, less Tibetan. It is introducing them to new technologies and styles, and leading them away from their traditional lifestyles.

But this is the education that the parents have strived to give their children – in order to give them increased opportunities in life. This is the education that has been funded by the same force of tourism that seems to have revitalised cultural pride in the general population. The people of Jiuzhaigou, and Panya particularly, consider education to be necessary for increasing their ability to make choices about their future – for empowerment, and for wellbeing.

On the one hand, a concept of choice is considered an important part of wellbeing according to the Panya understanding of the concept; and this choice for the young people is to come about through increased education. On the other hand, it seems that education is negating another important aspect of the young people's wellbeing – cultural identity. Tourism is leading to increased expression of culture, and increased choice and opportunity, but at the exact same time is indirectly endangering the cultural identity of the very people who are meant to maintain this culture in the future. How can these two differing forces be reconciled? This is the dilemma that the people of Panya face as they reflect on the future of their community.

Using a framework such as Scheyvens' (1999) empowerment and tourism framework, tourism in Jiuzhaigou has also empowered the people of Panya economically, socially and psychologically.<sup>7</sup> Empowerment in the form of being able to have choice over one's future is a key value in the Panya understanding of well-being. Mass tourism has provided both income and opportunity for individuals and families to branch out into business, administrative positions, or tourist guide jobs – considered a much greater range of choices as compared to being a farmer or a monk. Most importantly tourism has provided the means for their children to be educated – for they see that education can provide an even greater range of choices than those provided by mass tourism directly.

### **Wrestling with reconciliation**

There is no short and easy answer to this dilemma, but its worth wrestling with if the tourism-based development of Western China is to continue. Many people would use this example to show why tourism is evil, why 'development stinks' (Esteva 1987: 135) – why we should just leave people alone to their culture. The romanticisation of traditional cultures has led to the belief that:

...deprivation is not so bad; that their [the outsider's] prosperity is not based on it; that the poorer people are used to it and like life that way... (Chambers 1983: 4).

But in discussing this issue with the people involved in Panya village, it is clear that strict preservation of traditional culture is not considered a valid solution. As Rangan notes:

It seems ironic that contemporary scholarly debates should clamour for a 'post-development' era just when voices from the margins – so celebrated in discourses of difference and alternative culture – are demanding their rights to greater access to a more generous idea of development (Rangan cited in Scheyvens 2002: 7).

Totally rejecting the idea of development is to accept current 'unfreedoms' (to use Sen's 1999 terminology) and inequalities on behalf of 'those in the margins' who are in fact wanting to access development. Friedmann also argues that the solution is not in the rejection of development, warning that:

<sup>6</sup> The term 'Han' comes from the Han dynasty (about 200BC) and refers to the main ethnic group of China as opposed to the 55 *shaoshu minzu* or 'minority nationalities' that Tibetans are included among.

<sup>7</sup> Although with somewhat limited benefits politically, as discussed in Dombroski, 2005, unpublished thesis.

...to bury development in the language of cultural relativism and endogeneity (that all development must germinate from within a particular culture) would be to silence all development discourse while giving free rein to the existing hegemonic system, which is fuelled by Western ideas and ideals and is wholly untroubled by questions of cultural relativism (Friedmann 1992: 12).

In the case of Panya, where the people have welcomed and embraced tourism and development, it would be a ridiculous suggestion to fall back on "I told you so" type statements about the worthlessness of development. Johnston (2003), in the context of tourism, insists on the right of the community to decide whether it wants to have a tourism economy or not as an important part of self-determination. Empowerment in tourism development is not just about people receiving various benefits, but about their own ability to regulate how tourism development affects their lives. Claiming that tourism development is inappropriately changing culture, from the outside, is to in fact deny people's right to decide this for themselves.

So what have the people of Panya come up with themselves? How have they combated cultural degradation, if at all? Have they curtailed choice for the sake of cultural preservation? Or have they sacrificed tradition for the sake of increased opportunities? Of course, I cannot claim to know all of the issues involved for them, but for the most part it appears that people continue to give the young people free choice even as they realise the dangers of the children becoming 'Hanified'.

### **Choice as part of cultural identity**

The reason for the continuing practice of giving the young people of Panya increased choice (despite complaining verbally about cultural change) may lie in the fact that the valuing of choice is actually part of their cultural identity. Rather than visualising livelihoods, choice and cultural identity as equal parts of wellbeing, it would be more correct to argue that in fact all value-judgements are made within cultural bounds. Hence, the values of wellbeing, choice and livelihoods are actually all enveloped within the realm of their worldview, part of their cultural identity. In some ways then, to deny choice for their children would be in fact to deny a part of their cultural identity.

It is clear that choice is an integral part of the culture of the Jiuzhaigou Tibetans, when comparing them with Han Chinese. The government of China (and to an extent the Administration of the reserve) hold a very utilitarian view of development – that choice is irrelevant as long as people are happy – holding that if people receive enough benefits, they won't mind if they don't have freedom. The good for the few is easily sacrificed for the many, and freedom and choice are considered less important than unity and stability (Meisner 1996). Within the family, children are expected to obey their elders unquestioningly, and parents will choose their child's education and career path with little input from the child concerned.<sup>8</sup> The benefit of this kind of attitude is that cultural degradation can be slowed by insisting people continue as tradition dictates.

The Tibetans in Jiuzhaigou however, placed a high priority on choice. They did not see it as a valid option to instruct their children on their own lives as such. Children generally chose their own subjects at school, and parents insisted that they were going to let their children choose their own tertiary study or career paths, subject to finance. The persistence of the concept of choice came through in all interviews. The children were not forced to study or to stay in school, and likewise, were not forced to keep their Tibetan culture. Does this spell a weakness in the people of Panya, a weakness that will lead to their ultimate cultural extinction?

Possibly the outward forms of Panya's culture may be subject to change, increasingly so as technology begins to play a larger part in their lives. But technological, outward changes do not necessarily mean that inwardly a culture is dying. As can be seen when comparing the Jiuzhaigou peoples to the wider Han Chinese culture, to deny choice would be to deny the very thing that makes them psychologically and socially distinct from the national culture. In the end, there was no dilemma for the women of Panya. In the end, cell-phone toting and label-bashing are outward things, things that do not define one as Tibetan or Han Chinese.

### **The choices made**

When compared with the other Tibetan young people I met from other areas in the province, the youth of Panya emerge as very special indeed. Each one of them had an immense amount of confidence in their future, and a commitment to their community and their home region. Qie Jiu, 18, loves teaching his high school friends traditional Tibetan dances – he is going to study to become a music and dance teacher. Cuo Mei, 19, makes plans for university with the ultimate aim of returning to Jiuzhaigou to work. Suo Lang, 24, has just graduated from a polytechnic forestry course, which he started after noting some problems with the survival of trees under the replanting scheme. Xi Wang, 19, rebukes a tourist who calls Tibetans dirty in fierce defence of his community. And then there's the role model provided by Qie Xiao, 29, of Zharu village, who has recently become one of the reserve's vice directors, and works hard to ensure that the people of Jiuzhaigou receive jobs and benefits. These young people had the advantage over Tibetans from nearby Nanping and other regions around Sichuan not just economically, but socially and psychologically. They were proud of their origins, and did not deliberately try to hide their Tibetaness.

The people of Panya allow that choice is an integral part of their cultural identity, yet they have only really been able to express this or test this value relatively recently through economic, social and psychological empowerment. Although dress, music, technology and even language may change over time, the empowerment of the people of Panya is something that will ensure the continuance of the important aspects of their culture. The increased education of the young people of Panya has enabled them to increase their choices in way that does not necessarily reflect total Hanification. As Harrell and Ma rightly point out in the context of minority groups in China:

It is important to realise that when members of a minority group adopt education as a mobility strategy, they are not necessarily validating the education project of making them into compliant and subordinate citizens (Harrell and Ma 1999: 217).

The youth of Panya and their families appear to be harnessing education to contribute to their own goal of empowerment and increased choice. This in turn can contribute to the sustainability of the benefits already received by the community, since it enables educated Panyazhai members to secure jobs in the reserve administration.

<sup>8</sup> This statement is made on the basis of experience both with teaching English in China, and with 3 years of involvement with Chinese international students' pastoral care in Palmerston North.

### Lessons for culture change and empowerment

There is an important lesson that can be learned from this example of empowerment and cultural change. It is clear then that empowerment is not the same as cultural preservation, and that in some situations it may not even lead to cultural preservation. This is because culture has sometimes developed within situations of disempowerment. As seen in the Panya example, choice is an important part of community culture that has only recently been given increased expression due to empowerment. The fact that until recently the culture and religion of the people of Panya has been based around the yearly farming cycle was due to the fact that people had no choice but to farm this mountainous land – an ‘unfreedom’ in opportunity. The fact that it is now based around the schooling year and the ebb and flow of tourists is not exactly a loss, since it is a result of increased empowerment and choice through increased income and social benefits. Although the women of Panya feared the Hanification of their children, they also assured me that if they could go back to their previous lives of farming, they most definitely would not.

Clearly, then, empowerment is going to look different in different situations, as depends on the people and circumstances involved. Some parts of culture and tradition are considered worth preserving, whereas others were never there by choice to start with. When looking at the case of the people of Panya, the cultural preservationist view that rejects development and tourism for fear of global homogenisation appears well-intentioned but overly simplistic and hypocritical in a changing world. The idealisation of indigenous peoples, especially evident with Tibetan culture, is something of a ‘search for glimpses of “closeness” between nature and culture’ where ‘what we no longer have, or think we don’t have, we seek elsewhere’ (Robinson 1999: 381). The morphing of bio-conservation into cultural conservation may be more about acting out Western nostalgia than about seeking the best interests for those we ‘gaze’ upon. Although Panya is just one community in a specific situation with its own issues and problems to deal with, it does serve to make a clear point: that empowerment and self-determination should outweigh the zooification version of cultural preservation.

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## A Comparative Examination of the Local Socio-Cultural and Environmental Impact of the Global Oil Palm Industry

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### Introduction

Oil Palm is one of the most dynamic agricultural products in the world. Globally, it is the second most consumed edible oil with indicators suggesting it will overtake soy in the next two decades. It is a highly efficient crop, producing ten times more oil per hectare than soybean, palm oil's major market competitor.<sup>1</sup> Most consumers are unaware they are using oil palm. It is an insidious product found in a range of food and industrial products including soaps, cosmetics, lubricants, margarine and cooking oils, chocolate, biscuits and chips. Oil palm products are also central to the chemical and livestock industries. Unilever, Heinz, Cargill and Cadbury-Schweppes are examples of big palm oil consuming, and in some instances, producing multinationals.

Multilateral organisations and government reports highlight the development benefits oil palm brings to a nation. Globally, the industry employs millions of people and generates billions of dollars for multinational and national corporations as well as governments in terms of tax revenue. The second largest country producer of oil palm, Indonesia, recognises its economic contribution by celebrating the crop on its Rp 1,000 coin.

Only recently has attention been drawn to the negative affects this industry has on local communities' economy, culture and environment. This paper examines the impact of the oil palm industry on local communities using Malaysia, Costa Rica and Panama as case studies. The cases are at very different stages in the development of the oil palm industry. Malaysia is the largest producer of palm oil in the world with a mature industry over twenty five year old while the oil palm industry is a nascent industry in Costa Rica and Panama.

It looks at the process of corporate plantation land acquisition and examines issues such as the impact of deforestation and land loss on native peoples. Loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution along with the recently initiated move towards 'sustainable oil palm production' (RSPO 2004), smallholders and co-operatives, labour issues including child labour laws and its impact on women and the household, and the use of international migrants are also considered.

### Background

Oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) is indigenous to the forests of central Africa. It remains an important crop in Africa where small holders intercrop it with cassava, maize and yams, processing the oil manually.

The tree's lifespan is over 200 years but its economic life expectancy is from 4 – 25 year years of age, after which it is too tall to harvest. Oil palm grows in the lowlands of the tropics, between 15° N – 15° S latitude. Typically, the palms are cultivated on large blocks of land with a planting density of 128 – 148 palms per hectare.

### Production

The palm is harvested for the fruit which is part of the fruit bunch. A bunch, weighing between 20 and 70 kg, contains from 400 to 2000 individual fruits. The fruit consists of the nut or kernel and the mesocarp. Crude Palm Oil is extracted by cooking, washing and pressing the fleshy mesocarp. The kernel, which in Africa was the part prized as a food, is also a valuable product which is crushed for its oil and also for the meal. Kernels are separated, cracked and the shell is removed to produce Palm Kernel Oil, which is approximately ten per cent of the total oil yield.

The most efficient method of harvesting a fruit bunch is with a 4-5 meter long pole with a sharp sickle-shaped blade attached to one end. In order to reach the fruit, the palm fronds in front of the fruit bunch must first be cut down. Once accomplished, the harvester's blade can reach behind the bunch to cut down the fruit. The heavy bunch falls with loud thump with individual fruits falling from the bunch, scattering across the ground.

Bunches are transported either by bicycle (e.g., Malaysia) or donkey (e.g., Costa Rica) to the roadside where men load them into a truck for transport to the mill. Sometimes the loading is done by men lifting one heavy bunch at a time over their heads onto the truck. A less labourious method is for the men to stack the bunches onto netting which is then mechanically raised and loaded.

People must collect and sack into 50 kilo bags all the individual fruits which fell off the bunch. This is back breaking work requiring the collector to be bent over for long portions of the day. Oil palm mills require certain percentages of the fruit bagged individually as it indicates the ripeness of the fruit hence the level of acidity. If sufficiently ripe the authorities know approximately how many fruit per bunch will fall away. A mill, in Costa Rica requires a cooperative to have seven per cent of all fruit sacked. If they are under or over the percentage they do not receive a cash bonus.

Oil palm seed stock is important to large corporations. Many plantations not only have their own nurseries but also their own laboratories involved in cloning research. Nurseries grow as many as 250,000 seedlings per year, not only for their own plantations but also for local smallholders. Smallholders pay one price for seedlings if they have a contract to sell their fruit to the plantation's mill and a higher price if they do not.

### Malaysia and Indonesia

Malaysia and Indonesia account for over 84 per cent of global palm oil production. In 2003, Malaysia has nearly 3.5 million hectares under production and Indonesia's oil palm sector is nearly 3 million hectares (FAO 2004). Since the 1960s, oil palm has played a

<sup>1</sup> World oil palm yield is 5,200,915 HG/HA (hectogramme [100 grammes] per hectare) whereas the world soybean yield is 1,293,915 HG/HA although the area harvested for soybeans is 83,695,277 HA but only 11,788,082 Ha (FAO 2004) for oil palm.

central role in Malaysia's national government policy aimed at eliminating poverty as well as reducing income disparities between ethnic communities.

A major source of foreign exchange and employment, oil palm has brought economic growth. In 1997, Indonesia's palm oil industry produced 2.9 million tonnes of oil, bringing in earnings of approximately US\$1.4 billion, 31 per cent of all of Indonesia's agricultural exports for the year. The industry employed over two million people. Former President Suharto, in 1996, pledged Indonesia would overtake Malaysia as the world's largest producer of palm oil by doubling the land under production to 5.5 million hectares by 2000, with oil production reaching 7.2 million tonnes in 2000 and 10.6 million tonnes in 2005. In 2003, nine million hectares have been allocated for oil palm (AIDEnvironment 2004). While these goals have not been achieved, production growth has still been astounding with an increase in 22,820,000 metric tons of oil palm fruit. The expansion occurred on Indonesia's outer islands of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Irian Jaya and especially Sumatra (Casson 2000:2).

But there are concerns even though there are benefits. Oil palm production had expanded at the expense of dense tropical forest cover in both Indonesia and Malaysia. The 1997/98 forest fires of Southeast Asia affected more than five million hectares in Kalimantan alone. Much of the smoke haze is attributable to the burning of forests for oil palm production (Sargeant 2001). In Indonesia, of the 176 companies accused of forest burning 133 were oil palm companies; only five were prosecuted. The haze and fire affected 70 million people with an economic cost of 4 billion US dollars. (Wakker 1998:7).

Much of Indonesia's land under oil palm production is the result of the former Dutch colonial government's agrarian laws on land that stated land not under permanent cultivation was 'waste land'. The law gave companies a 75 year renewable lease at minimal rent. The lands on the outer islands are, in most cases, not 'waste lands' but rather regions inhabited by tribal people who are hunter/gatherers and swidden cultivators (Gordon 2001: 317). The law therefore places their traditional lands under threat of conversion; hence challenging the maintenance of traditional livelihoods.

In Sarawak, Malaysia as well as Indonesia, government policy is resulting in conflict between native peoples and companies. In Sarawak, oil palm is known as the 'crop of gold'. It is the state's most important agricultural commodity (Lal 1999b). Iban are finding the state government leasing to private companies land they hold by native customary rights (Native Customary Land). Thousands of acres of land held under Native Customary tenure without gazetted titles have been opened up to leasing by the state government (Majid Cooke 2002; Barney 2004). Land is opened and planted before indigenous people are officially notified. They receive no financial compensation. Native people are resorting to blockades to stall land surveys. This is resulting in their arrest for obstruction of land surveys (anon. 1999; Lal 1999a). In some land conflicts in Indonesia, companies paid police or military officials to suppress the unrest. This, Friends of the Earth points out, is a human rights violation (Wakker 2004: 25).

#### **Hma' Btsisi'**

My interest in oil palm developed while living with Hma' Btsisi', an *Orang Asli* (Malay, 'Native People') 'tribe' of West Malaysia in 1980 - 1982.<sup>2</sup> Living in coastal Selangor, Btsisi' reside on the mainland and on islands just off the coast. Nearly half of all Btsisi' reside on Pulau Carey, a 35,000 ha island of which 20,000 ha were owned by Harrisons & Crosfield, a British company which established the plantation to grow coffee.

Over the twentieth century Harrisons & Crosfield gained access to the entire island except the 14,000 hectares of forest reserve and the 1000 hectares of aboriginal reserve.<sup>3</sup> While some of the oil palm was planted on converted coffee fields, most of the oil palm was planted on rainforest and mangroves cleared for the oil palm.

Traditionally, Btsisi' were hunters, gatherers and swidden cultivators. By the 1980s, due to deforestation, Btsisi' were no longer able to carry out their traditional economic activities becoming dependent upon the plantation for their livelihood (Nowak 1988, 2002). Btsisi' had become landless proletariat (Nowak 1985, 2002). This is a pattern commonly found in plantation economies, as Beckford (1972:177) points out: '...inherent in a plantation system is a tendency toward monopolization of land by plantation owners as a device to deprive the majority of people access to an independent livelihood and therefore to ensure the plantation of labour supplies.'

Among Btsisi', the most typical household division of labour for plantation work was for the men to cut down the palm fronds and fruit bunches while their wives and children collected the individual fruits and stacked the cut palm fronds. Only the harvesters - men - received a wage. Unless women were the primary plantation employee they received no health benefits or worker's compensation leaving households vulnerable when the women were unable to work.

Harvesting is an activity most successfully accomplished with the labour of more than one person. If a Btsisi' man did not have a partner to help him he would find the task impossible and abandon harvesting, such as households in which a woman was not able to work because of young children. In contrast, a household with a teenaged son, strong enough to work would form a harvesting team with his mother or younger sibling. This was the optimal household situation. This division of labour secured a monthly income while also allowing the father freedom to perform tasks such as fishing which provided the household with food and a supplementary income.

Harvesting is hard, tiring and dangerous work. Not only is the bunch heavy, but thorns on the fruit can injure a harvester. A man cut his eye open when a rogue fruit fell from the tree and thorns get under the skin of women and children when they are gathering the fruit. There is also possibility of snake bites. Plantation management uses snakes to control the rat population, a pest which eats the fruit.

Another major health issue involves the use of agro-chemicals. Paraquat dichloride is the most commonly used herbicide in plantations. Paraquat accumulates in the soil with repeat applications. Paraquat is toxic and can be fatal if inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin; there is no antidote. Nosebleeds, eye irritation, contact dermatitis, nail discoloration and abdominal ulcerations are symptoms

<sup>2</sup> Btsisi' are also known as Mah Meri. There are about 1300 Btsisi' residing in nine villages. There are 18 distinct *Orang Asli* communities, numbering just over 100,000 or .5 percent of the total Malaysian population.

<sup>3</sup> As I note later in this paper, the government revoked a portion of one aboriginal reserve for a Malay reserve; vast tracts of forest reserve have since been converted to oil palm.

of paraquat poisoning. Plantations hire women to apply herbicides. Exposure occurs when women mix and apply paraquat in the fields. Pumps leak and oftentimes women can not wash their hands. Women do not wear protective clothing complaining of the heat and humidity (Fernandez *et al.* 2002). Carrying the pumps on their backs, women find the weight on their shoulders a great strain as is the pumping action. Anecdotal stories suggest women doing this work have more miscarriages.

By 2002, few Btsisi' worked for the plantation. Wages, less than a subsistence income, had not increased in twenty-five years and the work was too far from home. The oil palm Btsisi' harvested near their village was reallocated to others and Btsisi' parcel assignment was too distant.<sup>4</sup> The company did not need to increase wages nor cater to Btsisi' wishes to keep them as workers. In the 1990s the plantation hired landless Malays. Not only did the company import labour competition but the government, in complicity with the plantation, allocated Malay workers a Malay Reserve, which was land the government revoked from Btsisi'.<sup>5</sup> Later in the decade, Indonesian labourers began working for the plantation.

Beckford (1972: 178) noted that plantations control the labour supply above their required needs thus allowing wages to remain depressed at subsistence levels. Plantation economies ensure unskilled labour is replaceable with other poor, landless workers willing to work at subsistence wages (Chomsky 1996). Chomsky (1998:170) observed that plantations divide workers' interests along lines of race, ethnicity and nationality which keep them from challenging or resisting company policy. This is similar to the situation for Btsisi'. The introduction of Malay and then Indonesian workers not only kept wages depressed, but also divided workers along lines of ethnicity and national identity thus ensuring a lack of unity between the harvesting communities.

If people have subsistence alternatives, they will become unwilling to work as wage labourers for the plantation (Beckford 1972). This was the case with a handful of Btsisi' households who withdrew from plantation work when their smallholdings, planted in the mid-1980s, matured providing sufficient household income. In 2002, a wealth ranking highlighted that households villagers categorised as 'wealthy' were oil palm smallholder households. Poor households were landless. Thus, oil palm has made some people's quality of life better and allowed people to build permanent houses and buy food and other commodities.

Chomsky (1996: 7) argued that in some situations, such as the United Fruit Company (UFC) in Costa Rica, the plantation has trouble controlling and retaining its labour force as well as attracting new labourers. UFC's solution was to put production in the hands of smallholders who grew the fruit and were responsible for its harvest but who were dependent upon the company for the purchase and processing of the crop. This maintained smallholders' dependence upon the company. Chomsky argues that this made smallholders more vulnerable and dependent than the landless workers who, at least, were assured a wage.

Chomsky's analysis of UFC parallels the Btsisi' case. In 2002, smallholders became anxious over a rumour that the plantation was considering shifting production from oil palm to rapeseed, as palm oil was no longer profitable. This story would be beneficial to the plantation management. Smallholders remain dependent on the plantation for transport, purchase, processing and export of their crop. A rumour that the industry is no longer profitable introduces fear over the loss of livelihood, allowing the plantation to control the price it pays Btsisi' smallholders.<sup>6</sup>

Most Btsisi' do not have access to land to grow enough or any oil palm and are struggling to survive. However, after years of plantation work they are no longer willing to perform wage work at below subsistence wages, and are returning to more traditional maritime activities in hopes of selling sufficient produce for their households' cash needs. However, people are encountering problems due to severe marine resource depletion. Btsisi' face a dwindling supply of maritime fauna because of three main reasons: 1) competition from non-indigenous neighbours the plantation imported as labourers who do not use sustainable methods; 2) plantation reclamation of vast tracts of mangrove, and 3) pollution from palm oil mill effluent (POME).<sup>7</sup>

Where extensive mangrove forests once stood, today only a narrow fringe remains. The plantation proudly publicises the riparian reserve it maintains to act as a filtration system (Golden Hope 2004:3) but does not recognise the need to provide sufficient mass to preserve biodiversity. In 2002, on a brief trip into the mangrove, I saw more macaques and pangolins in one hour than I saw between 1980-1982. Btsisi' say this is because the animals have nowhere to go and must come out of cover to search for food. Mangrove fauna such as fish and crustaceans are scarce and animals such as monkeys and humans are now in direct competition for the little remaining food.

Contamination of rivers by POME is killing marine life far downstream from the mills. Today, mills have treatment ponds which corporations say controls the waste but the ponds overflow into the rivers during heavy rains, such as in the monsoon. Not only is the effluent causing a loss of mangrove biodiversity but there are also health concerns from the effluent. The rivers are exploited for food, and in some places, people do their laundry and bathe in them. POME has a potential impact on local communities' health.

In summary, while Btsisi' recognise how difficult dependency upon the mangrove and sea is for their livelihood, and how much more difficult a maritime livelihood is today than in past, they remain adamant that their independence is preferable to plantation work.

### Costa Rica

As a result of my experiences in Malaysia I became interested in examining the oil palm industry globally. I began reading about the industry and realised it was becoming increasingly important elsewhere.

<sup>4</sup> In Malaysia, oil palm is harvested in a parcel system. Harvesters are responsible for particular rows of oil palm which they harvest two to three times monthly. In places such as Costa Rica the plantation does not use the parcel system instead managers tell harvesters daily where they'll be working.

<sup>5</sup> Although there are government established reserves *Orang Asli* still lack security of tenure which means the government has the right to revoke Aboriginal land (see Hooker 1976; Nicholas 2000; Nowak 1987).

<sup>6</sup> The government, through the Malaysian Oil Palm Board, legislates a minimum price. Btsisi' are unaware of this legislation and it would not be a surprise if they were paid under the minimum price, although I need to research this point.

<sup>7</sup> POME is a by-product composed of water crushed shells and fat residue generated in the production of palm oil.

Costa Rica provided an opportunity to look at a nascent industry emerging following the demise of another plantation economy based on bananas. The appearance of *Fusarium* wilt forced the United Fruit Corporation (UFC) to abandon banana production. In some regions, persistent labour problems led to UFC's withdrawal.

In the 1960s UFC committed to oil palm acquiring Numar, a vegetable oil processing and marketing company in 1965. This acquisition vertically integrated UFC's vegetable oil venture (Richardson 1995) and resulted in an increase in plantings leading to Costa Rica's self-sufficiency.<sup>8</sup>

Palma Tica, Numar's subsidiary devoted to the cultivation and processing of oil palm, owns plantations in the Central Pacific and Southern Regions. In the 1990s, the company, facing competition from a cooperative, began purchasing additional land in southern Costa Rica. In 1997, the plantation expanded, clearing wetland and secondary forested area. The Ministry of the Environment and Energy demanded an immediate cessation of deforestation. The company ignored the Ministry and continued its operations. Not only did the company deforest, they also dredged. Their goal was to drain an expansive wetland area used by local people for fishing, hunting, and also as an economic zone for a growing ecotourism business.

Environmentalists went to court to stop Palma Tica's activities. Palma Tica, according to World Wildlife Fund, abandoned its activities to preserve its corporate public image (Figuerola 1999). Although legislation prohibits forest conversion, Palma Tica managers told me the government does allow conversion through an application process. Recognising that the process is difficult, management prefers to access rice and pasture land from smallholders. The overall impact of this type of conversion is still unknown but implications might be Costa Rica's loss of self-sufficiency in rice.

As is the case in Malaysia, Palma Tica depends upon contract labour. As plantation work is seasonal management contends: '...at times labour is needed at others times it is not' (Nowak 2004). Management argues it is too costly to employ a large labour force with present government labour regulations and union contracts. Contract work is the only economically viable solution. Although the plantation management does not want 'to exploit harvesters' they are aware contractors do. Management requires contractors to hire legal migrants and pay them the government established minimum wage with benefits. But management is aware that contractors do not follow the law and employ foreigners who illegally enter the country.

While in Malaysia, whole families work as harvesters, in Costa Rica there are child labour laws. Management does not like this law. I was told: 'If you do not learn how to harvest as a child, when will you learn? As an agricultural country, this will cause problems' (Nowak 2004). Although there are child labour laws, Palma Tica management acknowledged that harvesters employed by contractors 'Might take children into the fields, but we don't know. If children can't go...then mothers cannot, and this causes harvest problems.' Women collect and sack the loose fruit; the lowest paid work that only women will perform. While children are not supposed to be working in the fields, the likelihood is, they follow their mothers and help collect fruit.

The government legislates workers' wages which are established in negotiation between the plantation and the workers' union. Membership meets annually and leadership is elected bi-annually. The present union leader has been in his job for 27 years. Some members believe he is in the company's pockets. They do not understand that his salary comes from union membership through automatic wage deductions, and more critically, the lack of assistance members receive when the company punishes them for complaining about poor working conditions. One worker complained to management about snakes making the work dangerous. He lost his job and received no union support.

Housing and health issues are not improving even though the union leader mentioned these two areas as priorities. The union boasts great success in terms of negotiating a vacation programme, better education benefits and better salaries for their members and families. The union, however, has no pension programme, nor does it offer any training classes. Workers complain that in months of high fruit yield they are supposed to receive more money because they are harvesting more oil palm. But they do not necessarily see the greater yield translate into higher wages. This is because the union has not explained to them that they are paid market price. Thus, the union is not communicating with its membership. Among the rank and file there is extensive misapprehension and suspicion of union leadership.

To contest Palma Tica's monopoly and provide competition which keeps prices fair for smallholders, Copeagropal, a smallholder owned cooperative of 480 members, was established. The co-op grows seedlings, buys and processes oil palm. Members must sell their fruit to the cooperative. To join, people pay a membership fee and then they must attend classes to learn about the organisation. Every member must reinvest three per cent of their earnings which supports the co-op infrastructure and members' benefits. Benefits include classes in small business management, budgeting, technical assistance and computer literacy classes, as well as discounts on fertilisers, medical insurance and education scholarships.

Members are doing well and are happy with the co-op. Their incomes are increasing and members' children are receiving educational help and employment in the mills and offices. One member described oil palm as a 'blessing.' He tried raising cattle, growing rice and corn but had little financial success. His son works in the mill and his daughter takes computer classes. He has nearly paid back his loan to the government and feels financially secure. He believes the co-op and Palma Tica help the smallholder because it keeps prices competitive. However, he worries Palma Tica's entry into Nicaragua and Honduras will reduce oil palm prices as labour costs are lower which will translate into lower prices the co-op could not compete with.

Many of the oil palm smallholders in Costa Rica received their land from the government. The government took over UFC land and provided land grants to the people with low interest loans. In some places, people formed cooperatives while in other locations smallholders opted to go it alone. The smallholder cooperative successes have been uneven. One co-op in Palmar Sur will complete its loan repayment on the 300 ha within the next year. Yet the same co-op defaulted on another parcel of land.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1950s Costa Rica imported palm oil from Lever Bros., in the Belgian Congo. With political unrest in the Belgian Congo in 1960, Malaysian palm oil was imported.

The Palmar Sur co-op has a contract with Palma Tica to purchase seedlings, fertilisers and herbicides (e.g., paraquat) at discount rates. In payment for this rate the co-op must sell all its fruit to the plantation. These types of deals ensure Palma Tica mills remain busy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Other independent smallholders, living close to Copeagropa, have opted to sell their fruit to the highest bidder. In making such a decision, the smallholder takes into consideration the waiting time for processing at the lower capacity hence slower co-op mill. Long waits result in higher transport costs and possibly less money if the fruit sits too long.

### Conclusion

The oil palm industry continues to expand. There is overwhelming evidence that the industry has deleterious impacts on local communities economically and culturally as well as on local environments. Best case scenarios need to be explored to provide positive examples of the way things should be done. While there is a Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO 2004) practices in which the signatories include banks, palm oil production companies, food and non-food processing companies and NGOs this roundtable can only be the beginning. When Golden Hope in its 'Report on Sustainable Oil Palm Production' (2004) touts their company as being environmentally aware through such processes as riparian borders, the company is not acknowledging that these minimalist borders do not maintain biodiversity nor are they recognising the impact their practices have on local people's lives.

The question becomes whether countries such as Costa Rica and Panama can provide a positive model. While problems persist with Palma Tica, the cooperative system whereby the smallholders establish their own processing mills brings competition into the marketplace and provides smallholders with more choice and better prices. Costa Rica and Panama are examples of countries where smallholders are happy to have oil palm. The withdrawal of United Fruit's banana plantations left the local communities languishing with no foreseeable future development. Today, co-op members see their youth now willing to remain in the community which previously had extensive out migration rates. Development in the form of small businesses is occurring. This kind of community development does not seem to be occurring in places where smallholders are selling to the plantation and it isn't happening in plantation owned areas where migrants from other nations replace local harvesters who migrate out.

While smallholders have many problems including a dependency on the large commercial plantations, who can raise the prices smallholders pay for the seedlings or lower the prices for the smallholders palm oil, the case studies in both Malaysia and Costa Rica and Panama indicate that smallholding oil palm is economically preferential to plantation agriculture. Plantations in Malaysia and in Costa Rica are dependent upon migrant labour from neighbouring countries and in both countries plantation lands are expanding to neighbouring countries (Malaysia into Indonesia, and Costa Rica into Nicaragua) where labour and land are less costly. This has a consequence of threatening the ability of smallholders to sell their produce at a reasonable price.

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## Tourism, Globalisation and Poverty-Alleviation: Compatible Goals?

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### Introduction

Poverty is rife in our world. Despite decades of development planning, aid projects and programmes, grants, loans and structural adjustment, limited progress has been made in eliminating poverty. In fact, the number of countries with LDC (least developed country) status has grown from 25 in 1971 to 49 in 2002 (Saraogi 2004). It is perhaps not surprising therefore that poverty-alleviation has become the leading development agenda in the past decade and 'pro-poor' discourse has come to the fore. However this has been criticised in terms of its heavy focus on economic development, while overlooking important environmental, social and political issues: 'the pro-poor development paradigm... is considerably circumscribed in its premise of economic growth as the foundation of development' (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 34). Storey et al. (2003: 30) contest the notion of a 'new poverty agenda', suggesting that '...a poverty focus merely represents a different path to the same ends (i.e., political reform and economic adjustment)'. The poverty-alleviation focus is founded on a consensus among donors that globalisation offers a path out of poverty (Storey et al., 2003), thus the assumption is that protected economies cannot meet needs: they must successfully integrate with the global economy.

It is within this context that 'tourism' and 'poverty-alleviation' are being increasingly linked. The tourism industry seemingly offers an ideal avenue through which poorer countries can open up to the benefits of globalisation. There does seem to be significant potential to deliver more benefits from tourism to the poor, as tourism is a significant or growing economic sector in most countries with high levels of poverty. The tourism industry already employs over 200 million people world wide, and there has been a 9.5% annual growth in arrivals to developing countries since 1990, compared to 4.6% worldwide (IIED 2001). For over 50 of the world's poorest countries tourism is one of the top three contributors to economic development (World Tourism Organization 2000, cited in Sofield 2003: 350). At present tourism receipts from the 49 least developed countries only add up to 1 percent of the world total, so there is presumably capacity for further growth (WTO Secretary –General, cited in Travel Wire 2004). Furthermore, UNCTAD (1998) refers to tourism as the 'only major sector in international trade in services in which developing countries have consistently had surpluses'. It is argued that tourism as a sector 'fits' nicely with pro-poor growth because,

it can be labour-intensive, inclusive of women and the informal sector; based on natural and cultural assets of the poor; and suitable for poor rural areas with few other growth options (Ashley and Roe 2002:61).

However, there is a need for some caution when considering whether tourism can contribute to poverty-alleviation. For example despite good growth in the tourism sector, in 10 of the 13 countries which are home to 80 percent of the world's people who live in extreme poverty, tourism has not been able to reduce poverty (Plüss and Backes 2002: 10). Furthermore, there is a tendency to exaggerate claims for what tourism can achieve. These claims extend well beyond rosy economic projections for tourism earnings, with some suggesting that tourism is a universal panacea for overcoming poverty, inequality, and even conflict. For example, the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism proposed holding a symposium on 'Healing the Wounds of Conflict Through Tourism' (IIPT 2004). It has also been well-established in the tourism literature that in many cases it is foreign investors who reap the rewards of investment in poorer countries, while local peoples are left to deal with negative social and environmental fall-out of rapid tourism development (Britton 1982; Brohman 1996).

There are further concerns that tourism as a form of globalisation does not necessarily provide answers to the development woes of impoverished nations. Mowforth and Munt, for example, argue that the expansion of capitalist relations can undermine sustainable livelihoods (2003:273). Other specific concerns are listed below:

Overseas companies and investors which come into a country under pro-globalisation policies (e.g. tax breaks and other investment incentives) can push out small, local investors or businesses who find they cannot compete. Deregulation, privatisation, and trade liberalisation all favour MNCs, which then attract local capital which could have been invested in smaller, indigenous enterprises (James 2004:12).

In order to remain competitive in relation to other sand, sea and sun destinations, pay rates and labour conditions of tourism workers may be compromised (James 2004). Most Third World countries don't have the power to bargain effectively with foreign investors therefore it is unlikely that globalisation of tourism will lead to more enlightened labour force policies (Richter 2003:49).

When multinational companies and international agencies loan funds for infrastructure development for tourism, they gain increasing control over the industry in the destination area (Telfer 2003:100).

Governments cannot legislate to protect national interests by, for example, providing subsidies to support domestic businesses as under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, this is seen as 'trade-restrictive' (Mowforth and Munt 2003:266).

Globalisation can mean increasing vulnerability because of a reliance on fickle customers – thus many people have lost jobs in the tourism sector in the past few years in the wake of natural disasters (e.g. the Asian tsunami), global health concerns (e.g. SARS), and security threats (e.g. the Bali bombings). 5000 tourism employees were made redundant on Bali in 2002/3 as a direct result of the Bali bombings followed by the SARS epidemic (James 2004:13).

International tourism has inflationary effects, driving up local prices for land, food, rent and so forth, impoverishing some people (James 2004).

While governments will invest in infrastructure to meet the needs of tourists, local people often have to live without the basics. Thus there may be plenty of fresh water for the resort swimming pool or golf course, but insufficient water to irrigate nearby crops and no provision of piped drinking water to adjacent villages (Richter 2001:50).

There are strong arguments that globalisation does not necessarily offer a path out of poverty, thus the concept of using tourism as a mechanism for poverty-alleviation requires careful analysis before industry, government and non-governmental actors give it their full support. In this context it may be wise to consider motivations behind the push for pro-poor tourism: is this coming from people who genuinely feel that there are ways in which a greater share of the multi-million dollar tourism industry could be directed towards the poor, or is it influenced more by neoliberal free trade and economic growth logic?

### Origins and support for poverty-alleviation through tourism

'Pro-Poor Tourism' (PPT), a term coined to mean 'tourism that generates net benefits for the poor' (Ashley and Roe 2002:62), was first used in the development literature around 1998. It emerged largely out of UK-sponsored research on sustainable livelihoods conducted in southern Africa (see for example Ashley and Roe 1998; Ashley et al. 2000; Ashley et al. 2001; DFID 1999; Deloitte & Touche 1999; Goodwin 1998; Shah and Gupta 2000). Since then PPT has become a specific focus of much research out of the UK, often conducted through the Pro Poor Tourism Partnership which involves both researchers and academics (see Table 1).<sup>1</sup>

While poverty has certainly become attractive to certain types of tourists (see Hutnyk 1996; Scheyvens 2001; Scheyvens 2002: Chapter 7), PPT is not about bringing tourists to be voyeurs of poverty. The PPT Partnership stresses that PPT is not a product, it is an approach to tourism which seeks to bring a wide range of benefits to the poor, including social, environmental and cultural benefits in addition to economic benefits. PPT does not aim to expand the size of the sector, but to 'unlock opportunities for the poor within tourism, at all levels and scales of operation' (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership 2005). This is interesting, as rather than just focusing at the community level where, for example, villagers might be encouraged to establish cultural tourism homestay or craft ventures, the PPT approach asserts that a wide range of stakeholders, from local entrepreneurs to government officials and international tour companies, will need to make concerted efforts if poverty reduction is to occur. The 'core activities' of PPT are then:

to increase access of the poor to economic benefits (for example, training, employment, supply linkages, information to tourists on community tourism ventures and the importance of buying local)

to address the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism (for example, loss of access to natural resources associated with creation of protected areas, social disruption)

to reform policies and processes (for example, to encourage partnerships with the private sector and to promote active participation of the poor in decision-making) (IIED 2001a).

Interest in tourism as a mechanism for poverty-alleviation has also been taken up more widely. A 1999 meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development urged governments to 'maximise the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, indigenous and local communities' (IIED 2001b:41). Meanwhile, the World Tourism Organization have initiated the ST-EP Project: 'Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty' (see <http://www.world-tourism.org/step/menu.html>; Sofield et al. 2004). In Australia, the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism has adopted the term 'STARP' – Sustainable Tourism Actively Reducing Poverty (Sofield 2003: 350), and multilateral organizations like the Asian Development Bank and World Bank have expressed support for strategies whereby tourism can lead to poverty reduction.

Table 1 lists some significant initiatives which have linked tourism and poverty-alleviation, identifying the implementing organisations and the focus of their activities.

**Table 1: Initiatives Linking Tourism and Poverty-alleviation**

<b>Initiatives Linking Tourism and Poverty-alleviation</b>	<b>Organisations</b>
PPT (Pro-Poor Tourism)	PPT Partnership involves three organisations: the Overseas Development Institute (UK), the International Institute for Environment and Development (London), and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (University of Greenwich) – they conduct research on ways in which tourism can bring benefits to the poor and disseminate their findings widely.
ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty)	World Tourism Organization and UNCTAD – funds both research and development projects that link tourism and poverty-alleviation.
STARP (Sustainable Tourism Actively Reducing Poverty)	Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, Australia – a term devised to direct their research.
People First Tourism	ACTSA (Action for Southern Africa) – aims to ensure that tourists are aware of ways in which they can maximise benefits of tourism to communities in developing countries, especially Southern Africa.
Empo-Tourism	Term coined in South Africa during the development of Spatial Development Initiatives - centres on using tourism to facilitate empowerment and to bring economic benefits to impoverished South Africans who were discriminated against under Apartheid (Ashley and Roe

<sup>1</sup> NB the PPT Partnership website, [www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk), lists a wide range of publications which are mostly accessible on line.

	2002:63).
Tourism Against Poverty (TAP)	International Council of Tourism Partners – this organisation promotes socially responsible and sustainable travel among travel providers, it supports the Millennium Development Goals, and showcases tourism ‘best practice’ on its website.
Fair Trade in Tourism	A UK partnership of Tourism Concern, Voluntary Service Overseas, and the University of North London – promote ethical trading practices by facilitating the exchange of ideas between tour operators, tourists and destination communities.

### Different perspectives on the relationship between tourism and poverty-alleviation

A summary of different theoretical perspectives on the relationship between tourism and poverty is provided in Table 2 (See Appendix). The philosophical underpinnings of these perspectives are: 1) critical; 2) liberal/neoliberal; and 3) alternative/neopopulist. For the purposes of this paper, attention will be paid to the contrast between neoliberal and alternative approaches to poverty-alleviation through tourism.

#### Alternative approaches: meeting the needs of the poor through tourism

The alternative approaches to poverty-alleviation through tourism are informed by a number of bodies of thinking. As mentioned above, a sustainable livelihoods perspective has influenced PPT in that tourism is seen as another means of diversifying the livelihood options of the poor. Similarly sustainable development thinking has also supported the growth of interest in PPT as people and poverty have become central to sustainable development discourse, as evidenced by discussions at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Alternative development perspectives including ideas on participation, equity, and empowerment, have also been used to drive a number of initiatives to make tourism more focused on meeting the needs of the poor (e.g. the ‘People First Tourism’ campaign and Fair Trade in Tourism mentioned in Table 1 (<http://www.actsa.org/Tourism/main.htm>; Shah and Gupta 2000).

Less acknowledged, however, is that neoliberal perspectives which promote tourism as a means of growing the economy so countries can ‘trade their way out of poverty’, are driving the interest from some quarters in using tourism as a means of eliminating poverty.

#### Neoliberal approaches: using tourism to trade your way out of poverty

It would be difficult for any advocate of alternative development to criticise the principles behind PPT outlined above. However, it is likely that a number of organisations including the World Tourism Organization, multilateral organisations and some donor countries, are adopting PPT rhetoric primarily as a means of advancing a neoliberal agenda which focuses on trade liberalisation, market-led growth and private sector development, while calling for minimum government ‘interference’ in market mechanisms. There is a clear connection then between globalisation discourse which promotes free trade and market-led growth and the tenets of neoliberalism. Critics are concerned that the push for poor regions and countries to develop tourism is centred squarely on a combination of beautiful ‘untouched’ natural and cultural attractions and, importantly, cheap labour: ‘to some extent tourism always feeds off the poverty of host regions’ (Pliuss and Backes 2002:12). We thus need to keep a clear distinction between the neoliberal notion of ‘making the poor work for globalisation’ (Mowforth and Munt 2003:41), and the alternative view of making globalisation work for the poor.

The World Tourism Organization has a mandate from the United Nations to promote and develop tourism on behalf of its 138 government tourist board members and 350 affiliate members (tourism associations, airlines, and hotel groups): it has no explicit interest in reflecting critically on tourism. Its partner in ST-EP is UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), an organisation focused on promotion of international trade.

Similarly when multilateral organisations push tourism as a means of poverty-alleviation they do this from a particular ideological position. For example, the World Bank promotes ‘growing out of poverty’. However, all that their own research can claim is that the growth-enhancing policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund ‘do not seem to affect income distribution negatively’ (Christie 2002:37). The World Bank endorses preservation of important natural and cultural resources and encourages participation of local communities, however it stresses that this needs to be backed up by a commitment from governments to ‘make markets work for tourism’ (Christie 2002:36). For example, it is suggested that any ‘enlightened’ government will recognise that in order to achieve development through tourism it is vital to adopt certain reforms, such as guaranteeing investors clear title to land (Christie 2002:36). This supposition is not borne out by fact, as the case of tourism in Samoa (see below) demonstrates. While grand claims have been made about the World Bank and International Monetary Fund’s shift from Structural Adjustment Programmes, which entrenched poverty in many countries, to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which involve a more participatory process, a renewed role for the state and greater provision of social services, it is still business as usual with the push for free trade. Promoting international tourism fits nicely into a strategy of getting indebted countries to trade their way out of poverty.

Sofield (2003:350) suggests another motivation for the interest of multilaterals in alleviating poverty. He comments that the World Bank and Asian Development Bank revised their funding for tourism after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, because some analysts had interpreted the attacks as evidence that ‘endemic poverty underlies instability in many parts of the world’. There is at least a partial motivation then to use tourism to reduce poverty in order that poverty does not become a breeding ground for terrorism.

#### Case studies

In this section, case studies are provided of countries taking neoliberal and alternative paths to economic development.<sup>2</sup> In the case of those adopting neoliberal reforms, there is no direct association between tourism-led growth and poverty-alleviation. In the alternative case studies, however, it is clear that government-controlled tourism development can lead to considerable economic benefits while promoting a more sustainable form of development.

### **Taking the neoliberal path**

In Peru, the neoliberal policies enacted under Fujimori from 1990 onwards have been associated with a dramatic increase in tourism: arrivals tripled between 1992-96. There have certainly been macroeconomic benefits from this growth, however in the same period poverty has become entrenched, livelihood strategies have narrowed with a shrinking of the agricultural sector, and it has been acknowledged that many people are marginalised from the benefits of tourism (e.g. there is vast overproduction of craft goods for tourists) (Desforges 2000).

Ghana has faced economic restructuring based on neoliberal principles since 1983, and has been hailed as a structural adjustment success story for Africa. Tourist arrivals increased from around 85,000 in 1985 to 286,000 in 1995, and tourist receipts increased from US\$20 million to US\$233 million over the same period (Konadu-Agyemang 2001). However, spatial disparities in Ghana have been entrenched during this time: most tourists avoid peripheral regions of the country because although they have natural and cultural attractions, provision of tourist infrastructure is poor. Meanwhile the quality of life of many Ghanaians has declined, and there are concerns about high leakages from the tourism sector due to increasing rates of foreign ownership of tourism infrastructure. In addition, devaluation of the cedi has made it difficult for locals to afford imported products such as medicine, while enabling travellers to see Ghana as a 'cheap destination' (Konadu-Agyemang 2001:194).

The Maldives do not provide a classic example of neoliberal growth strategies as there is heavy state control over business development. However, the government relies heavily on foreign investors in the tourism sector thus it provides interesting insights into the imperative of trade liberalisation. In the hundreds of tiny atolls in the Indian Ocean that constitute the Maldives, the government has pursued a model of developing 'tourist islands' which are separate from 'inhabited islands' in a bid to protect culture. Foreign investors are able to bid for islands on which they wish to establish resorts, and strict conditions are placed on these resorts to ensure they have environmentally sound practices involving for example, water and waste disposal. For such reasons the Maldives have sometimes been cited as a prime example of sustainable tourism development. However, the resorts cater largely for higher spending, luxury tourists, and most of the provisions on the resort islands need to be imported as there is little arable land in the Maldives. While fruit and vegetables are flown in to the resort islands, local islands receive few fresh foods leading to a situation whereby thirty percent of young people are undernourished. Thus while 88 percent of GDP is made up of income from tourism (the highest dependence on tourism revenue in the world), there are heavy leakages (Tourism Concern 2004: insert). Tourism has exaggerated existing inequalities between Maldivians: while the average annual income is US\$5,000, many outer islanders live on US\$365 per annum, thus almost half of the population survive on US\$1.17 a day (Tourism Concern 2004: insert).

### **Countries doing tourism on their own terms**

Tourist arrivals in the Pacific Island country of Samoa almost doubled between 1990 and 2000, from around 48,000 to over 87,000 arrivals. Tourism revenue has tripled in this period, such that tourism is now the largest industry in Samoa (Twining-Ward and Twining-Ward 1998:262). Yet Samoa offers a unique model of tourism development. Rather than being dominated by large foreign-owned resorts as in common in other Pacific destinations, the tourism industry in Samoa is characterised by small-medium sized enterprises owned largely by Samoans.

Several factors have combined to result in what is a very valuable tourism sector in which Samoans retain control: 1) a cautious approach by government to tourism development, 2) ambivalence from local people about tourism development, based largely around concerns about its potential impacts on local culture, and 3) land owner control over outside investment in tourism. Essentially the majority of efforts by overseas investors to gain access to prime beach side locations have been thwarted, and instead the coastline is dotted with small, family-owned beach fale enterprises. These enterprises help to diversify the livelihood options of rural communities, their economic benefits are spread locally through the multiplier effect because they utilise many local products and draw upon local skills, and they enhance the pride of rural communities who feel honoured that visitors from all over the world have come to stay near their village and are interested in Samoan culture (Scheyvens 2005).

Thus neoliberal imperatives have not guided the development of tourism in Samoa, yet it is a very valuable economic sector, bringing jobs and revenue and effectively rejuvenating a number of rural villages.

The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has also thwarted the neoliberal model of growth. It takes a 'Middle path' approach to economic development whereby there are strict controls over the type and amount of tourism, in order to maximise revenue minimise negative effects on religion, culture and the environment (Brunet et al 2001). Thus only around 6000 visitors a year are allowed to visit and they must spend a minimum of US\$200/day. In 1999 GDP per capita in Bhutan was US\$550, the highest in South Asia. Yet tourism still has the potential to provide jobs for educated young people who do not wish to pursue an agriculture-based lifestyle.

This approach accords with the King's aim: to preserve GNH (Gross National Happiness). 'Happiness' is defined in both a material and spiritual sense, thus the focus is not a move towards a more individualistic, consumeristic, commodity-focused world, rather, there is strong recognition of the value of Bhutanese culture (Brunet et al. 2001:257).

### **Conclusion: are tourism, globalisation and poverty-alleviation compatible goals?**

Pro-Poor Tourism and related terms have become popular catch phrases with a wide range of development industry and tourism stakeholders, but can they actually help to overcome the vast inequalities between the wealthy and the impoverished, inequalities

<sup>2</sup> There is not the scope in this article to fully explore the pros and cons of tourism in each of these case studies, rather, I will highlight how the overall approach to tourism in each instance – whether neoliberal or an alternative approach - has influenced tourism development and outcomes.

highlighted by international tourism (Harrison 2001:252)? The reality is still that 'Golf courses and enormous pools are an insult to more than 1.3 billion people denied access to clean water' (UNDP 1999, cited in Richter 2001:50).

Mowforth and Munt (2003:273) have commented that,

it is not unreasonable to consider the degree to which pro-poor tourism analysis and promotion is a repackaging of existing initiatives so that they fit within the prevailing development paradigm with an emphasis on poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and a focus on the poor and pro-poor growth.

That focus on pro-poor growth is based squarely in a neoliberal agenda. A neoliberal approaches which some agencies are thus using to link tourism and poverty-alleviation could eventually undermine local enterprises and place too much power in the hands of overseas companies and investors who are motivated by profit maximisation and have little interest in alleviating the suffering of the poor.

However, alternative approaches to PPT do hold out some promise. Desforges (2000:188) questioned whether the liberalization of the tourism sector is necessary for countries to take advantage of the expanding market for third world tourism. Certainly the examples from Samoa and Bhutan, discussed above, showed that an alternative path can reap substantial rewards, including greater control and self-determination, not just revenue. These examples also indicated that there is a need for effective governance structures if tourism is to maximise benefits to the poor. Early case studies of PPT show 'trickle down' doesn't work, and that 'a proactive interventionist approach is needed' whereby the poor are empowered (Sofield 2003:351). For example, it is difficult for large numbers of poor people to benefit from tourism in Burma when tourism revenue props up the oppressive military junta which is in power. Governments should ensure that local people have appropriate knowledge and skills so they are not sidelined from active involvement in tourism. They also need to find ways of supporting local industry through training and information, or through provision of a supportive policy environment. For example, appropriate policies and legislation could encourage local tourism businesses to be established on communal land, as in Samoa, without transferring rights of use or ownership to outsiders. There is thus potential for tourism to contribute to poverty-alleviation, however in analyzing this potential we need to carefully scrutinize the approaches the agencies concerned to see whose interests are central to their agenda.

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**Appendix**

**Table 2: Theoretical perspectives on the Relationship between Tourism and Poverty**

Language and Development: Implications of an Aotearoa New Zealand language attitude study for education projects in the South Pacific

Critical	Liberal/Neo-liberal	Alternative/Neo-Populist
[1970s-1980s] Tourism associated with enclave development, dependence on foreign capital & expertise, growing social and economic disparities	[1950s-1960s] Tourism can contribute to modernisation through economic growth; benefits will trickle down to the poor.	[1980s onwards] Alternative forms of tourism that are small-scale, involve education of tourists and more local control are worthy of promotion
[1980s onwards] Tourism sustains poverty e.g. people are resettled so national parks can be created, disrupting social networks and cutting off various livelihood options.	[early 1990s onwards] Tourism as a way out of indebtedness. It encourages foreign investment and private sector development while providing employment and generating foreign exchange.	[1990s onwards] Tourism can offer poor communities a means of diversifying their livelihood options.
[1990s onwards] Poverty sustains tourism: tourists are attracted to 'poor' places: 'turning poverty into the picturesque' e.g. adventure tourists, dark tourists.	[late 1990s onwards] PRSPs: Tourism as an economic sector that can reduce poverty. Focus on macro-economic benefits.	[late 1990s onwards] PPT has poverty-alleviation as its central aim. This means working with governments and influencing mainstream tourism industry players to maximise benefits for the poor.

**Language and Development: Implications of an Aotearoa New Zealand Language Attitude Study for Education Projects in the South Pacific**

Hilary A Smith

**Introduction**

The issue of language in education is so fundamental that it is often overlooked. This lack of attention often extends to international development contexts, where overseas education experts who may come from largely monolingual education systems encounter complex bilingual and multilingual contexts. In this paper I identify a theoretical understanding of language attitudes in Aotearoa New Zealand, before examining the implications for both the overseas experts and the local partners engaged in education projects for development in the South Pacific.

**New Zealand language study**

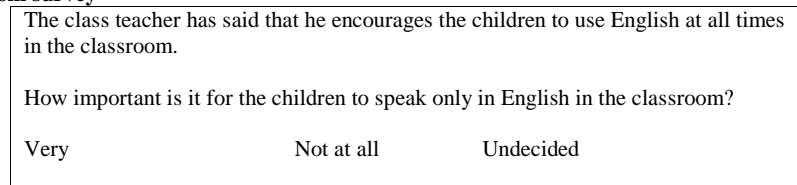
In 2001 I carried out an attitude study of teacher educators across all subject areas in the 21 teacher education institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. All staff involved in pre-service teacher education for the compulsory primary and secondary sectors were sent a survey which aimed at identifying attitudes in education contexts towards bilingualism - defined here as the use of two or more languages - and language diversity. The response rate was high, at 63.8% (619 responses, 395 eligible).

Some questions included a comparison of attitudes towards six different ethnolinguistic groups and their languages, chosen to represent different positions in the sociolinguistic landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand:

- Māori: The indigenous language, with the second largest number of speakers after English
- Sāmoan: The largest Pasifika<sup>1</sup> language spoken in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the third largest number of speakers after English and Māori
- French: A European language, with traditionally high prestige for English speakers; in Aotearoa New Zealand it is the most often taught in schools (Waite 1992b: 70) and has the fourth largest number of speakers
- Korean: An Asian language spoken by a recent small but rapidly growing group of immigrants
- Russian: A European language represented by small numbers of immigrants
- Somali: An African language spoken by a small refugee group

Attitudes towards the different ethnolinguistic groups and their languages were compared in this study through the questionnaire design rather than by asking individual respondents to make comparisons (see Smith 2004 for the survey design). For example, for each respondent the following question was asked in the context of a classroom scenario about a bilingual child and his mother from only one of the six language groups:

**Figure 1: Question from survey**



Overall, the largest number of respondents chose the 'not at all important' end of the scale (43.04%) or the one next to it (24.48%), which means that 67.52% gave a response that showed support for bilingualism and language diversity in the classroom. There was also a statistically significant difference according to the ethnolinguistic group of the mother and child in the scenario; the respondents were most likely to rate this on the 'not at all important' end of the five-point scale if the question came in the context of a scenario about a Māori or French child, and least likely for those with a scenario about a Sāmoan or Somali child.

Comparisons between the six languages were made in ten of the survey questions, and in five questions there were significant differences in responses according to the ethnolinguistic group. Māori was consistently most likely to be supported, whereas according to the question Sāmoan, Korean, Russian or Somali might be less supported, and for different questions French was at either end of the scale.

A number of variables were analysed to explain the difference in attitudes towards the various language groups. From the literature I had predicted that the background of the respondents would be important, but in fact none of the background variables tested (age, gender, ethnic background, first language, other languages learnt, highest educational qualification, linguistics study, primary/secondary sector, lecturer/tutor, full-time/part-time, subject areas, years as classroom teacher, years as teacher educator) was significant in tests. The difference therefore lay in the object of the attitudes being tested, in other words the language groups themselves. This finding can be explained by Giles and Coupland's (1991: 137) theory of ethnolinguistic vitality, in which three main variables are considered: status (economic, social, socio-historical, language), demography (distribution and numbers) and institutional support (formal and informal).

**Ethnolinguistic vitality of the groups**

As a snapshot of ethnolinguistic vitality of the groups, some indicators using data from the 2001 census are shown in Table 1: the numbers from each group, their median personal income and the numbers speaking each language. For comparison I have included the dominant group 'New Zealand Europeans' and their language, English.

**Table 1: Indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality**

	No. stating ethnicity <sup>a</sup>	No. speaking	Median personal
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<sup>1</sup> The term Pasifika is used for the communities from the South Pacific in Aotearoa New Zealand.

		language <sup>b</sup>	income (\$)
Māori	526,281	160,527	14,800
French	2,784	49,722	16,900
Sāmoan	114,432	81,033	15,600
Korean	19,026	15,873	5,300
Russian	3,084	5,550	11,200
Somali	1,986	1,635	7,600
NZ-European	2,689,308	3,425,301	19,700

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2001)

<sup>a</sup>Includes up to three responses per person. Includes all people who stated each ethnic group, whether as their only ethnic group or as one of several ethnic groups.

<sup>b</sup> Includes all people who stated each language spoken, whether as their only language or as one of several languages.

#### •Māori

The table shows that although Māori are the second largest ethnic group (526,281 people), a much smaller number speak it (160,527 speakers). Nineteenth century Europeans believed they were bringing a superior education system, and the Native Schools Act of 1867 resulted in the Māori language (te reo Māori) being replaced with English as the language of instruction. Māori also wanted their children to learn English (Donn and Schick 1995: 35):

They felt that learning in Māori would act as a barrier to their children's advancement. Because Māori was still the language of the family, English in schools was not seen as a threat to the maintenance of te reo Māori.

By the twentieth century the Māori language was mostly banned in schools, and children were physically punished for speaking Māori (Waitangi Tribunal 1989: 9). Research findings on the decline of the Māori language in the 1970s were seminal in the start of a Māori-initiated Māori language education revival, based around the Kōhanga Reo (language nest) pre-school movement established in 1981. Kōhanga Reo aimed to teach the language through Māori teaching and learning methods, and Māori-medium primary, secondary and tertiary level institutions have subsequently been established. Māori became an official language through the 1987 Māori Language Act. The importance of the Māori language as a taonga (or cultural treasure) has been reinforced by the Waitangi Tribunal (1989), and is considered an important aspect of Māori development (Durie 2002: 146).

#### •French

In contrast to Māori, there are many more speakers of French in Aotearoa New Zealand (49,722 speakers) than are ethnically French (2,784 people), reflecting its high status among English speakers. The two completely different results towards French may be explained by conflicting attitudes towards France and the French language: on the one hand attitudes towards French language and culture have been - and remain - positive, with links between both countries forged through two world wars, and French the most taught second language (Waite 1992b: 70). But on the other hand French politics in the Pacific have not been viewed positively, and the 1985<sup>2</sup> Rainbow Warrior incident was 'the first act of state-sponsored terrorism in New Zealand' (King 2003: 443).

#### •Sāmoan

The Sāmoan community is the largest Pasifika group in Aotearoa New Zealand (114,432 people), and the lower number of speakers indicates some language loss (81,033 speakers). Sāmoan migrants started arriving in large numbers in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to labour shortages, and the backlash in the notorious 'dawn raids' of visa overstayers in the mid-1970s resulted in low community prestige. Parents migrated to give their children better educational opportunities, which included learning English (Fetui and Mālaki-Williams 1996: 234). Around two thirds of the community live in Auckland, and strong institutional support is provided by churches including for early childhood centres following the Kōhanga Reo model (Fetui and Mālaki-Williams 1996: 237). A number of schools provide bilingual classes, the prime community motivation for which is not concern at language loss, but a desire for academic success (McCaffery et al. 2003: 85).

#### •Korean

The Asian population in Aotearoa New Zealand grew rapidly over the decade to 2001, and of all the Asian groups the Koreans experienced the highest growth. Table 1 shows that in 2001 Koreans had less than a third of the median income of New Zealand Europeans. Korean language has low prestige in Aotearoa New Zealand schools (Kim and Elder 2002: 66), and most Korean immigrants feel under 'great pressure' to shift to English, even in personal speech functions (Starks and Youn 1998: 9).

#### •Russian

The table shows that the Russian population in Aotearoa New Zealand is very small (3,084 people), although nearly twice as many people speak Russian (5,550 speakers). There is almost no information about the community in the literature.

#### •Somali

Somali as a refugee group have low status, and the smallest number of speakers (1,986 speakers). Somalis had less than half of the median income for New Zealand Europeans. Abdi et al. (2002) point out that the refugee background of Somali students in Aotearoa New Zealand schools causes many education problems, and Somali students find learning English very difficult.

In light of the above, I argue that the salience of ethnolinguistic vitality in determining language attitudes reflects an awareness in Aotearoa New Zealand of the importance of maintaining language for socio-political reasons, which also extends to cultural reasons. In the Ministry of Social Development's Social Report 2004, the three indicators of 'cultural identity' are local content programming on television, the proportion of the Māori population who speak te reo Māori, and the proportion of people who can speak the first language (other than English and Māori) of their identified ethnicity (Ministry of Social Development 2004: 85). However, the cognitive and academic benefits of first language maintenance and the development of bilingualism are less well understood.

<sup>2</sup> Agents of the French secret service bombed the Rainbow Warrior - a Greenpeace ship protesting about French nuclear testing in the Pacific - in Auckland Harbour, killing one of the ship's crew.

### The value of bilingualism

Cummins (2000) has reviewed the research on bilingualism in education, and discusses the positive outcomes when bilingualism consists of a new language being added to the child's first language, rather than replacing it. He concludes that the research results are:

unequivocal in demonstrating that additive forms of bilingualism are associated with positive linguistic and academic consequences. They also show clearly that literacy in two or more languages can be promoted by the school at absolutely no cost to students' academic development in English. (Cummins 2000: 50)

Dutcher and Tucker's (1997: 41) review for the World Bank in the Pacific of the use of first and second languages in education also stresses that learning a second language is more successful for children who have had the opportunity to develop their first language.

However, although Cummins states there is no academic cost to this approach, there is obviously a cost in terms of resources (human and material). In Aotearoa New Zealand, this has led to a prioritising of support for different language groups. For example, in Waite's (1992a, 1992b) discussion document for the development of a New Zealand languages policy<sup>3</sup>, a priority list for public policy headed up with revitalisation of the Māori language, followed by second-chance adult literacy, children's English as a Second Language and first language maintenance, adult English as a Second Language, national capabilities in international languages, and (finally) provision of services in languages other than English (Waite 1992a: 20-22). May's (2001: 184) analysis of language and minority rights suggests that 'variations of approach should exist' between different groups according to whether they are 'national' minority or 'ethnic' minority groups.

These rankings serve to emphasise the socio-political aspects of language policies within Aotearoa New Zealand, reflecting the ethnolinguistic vitality of groups in the whole society. However, they do not address the consequences for individual children from groups with low ethnolinguistic vitality who are missing out on the social, cultural and cognitive benefits of support for their two (or more) languages. I now turn to the implications of these findings for the international development context.

### Language as a development issue

A 'missing link' between development studies and sociolinguistics has been identified by Abbott (1996: 51-52, 2000: 219), who points out that the well-catalogued problems of education in developing countries rarely include consideration of the linguistic context, even though it is obvious that children are being educated in languages 'as exotic as mangoes in Manchester' (Abbott 1996: 45).

However, there has been a strong 'language and development' literature, with strongly polarised views. On the one hand there is Phillipson's theory of 'linguistic imperialism', a subtype of 'linguicism' which he defines as follows (Phillipson 1992: 47):

Ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.

Both Western aid donors and local elites who have been educated in colonial languages may be responsible for perpetuating the inequality established in colonial times (Abbott 1996: 46). The main focus in this literature is on English and the English Language Teaching industry, because while the same issues apply to other languages of former and current colonisation, the increasing global dominance of English is seen as particularly problematic (Pennycook 1998, Canagarajah 1999). At the other pole are writers such as Savage (1997: 314), who stresses the agency of local partners, and points out that the demand for English comes from people in non-English-speaking countries, who 'are fully aware of the roles that English and other languages play in their societies'.

Although this debate is vigorously contested within the English Language Teaching industry, the ideas do not seem to cross over into the wider development context. Bruthiaux (2000) has called for increased interdisciplinarity, particularly in the need to link language education with development economics. He emphasises that the development of 'literacy, health and better nutrition, and democratisation of basic choices' must be carried out in local communities, in local languages (Bruthiaux 2000: 286). These issues are being played out in the South Pacific context.

### The South Pacific context

Mugler and Lynch (1996: 2) note that the Pacific is 'the most linguistically complex region in the world'. The linguistic landscape in the South Pacific ranges from the (mainly) monolingual Polynesian countries, to the tremendously linguistically diverse Melanesian countries, with the lingua francas of Melanesian Pidgin (Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands) and Hiri Motu (Papua New Guinea). These are overlaid with the 'metropolitan' or former colonial languages: English (as in Tonga, Sāmoa, Papua New Guinea), French (New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Tahiti), and Spanish (Rapanui/Easter Island). In addition, Hindi is also used in Fiji.

The first European teachers were missionaries, before colonial governments imported education from Australia and New Zealand 'complete with foreign teachers, materials, examinations and a Trojan horse of attendant cultural assumptions' (Lotherington 1998: 65). Contact with Europeans brought about huge language loss, and language planning has been mainly for the benefit of the colonisers (Mühlhäusler 1995: 76, emphasis in original):

The reasons for the many acts of interference and planning were almost invariably the same: to enable outsiders to reduce THEIR communication problems and to equip THEM with means of communication that would allow them to exercise social and economic control of the colonised area. On the whole, the recent independence of many, but certainly not all, parts of the Pacific seems to have brought little change in this general picture.

However, there have been initiatives supporting vernacular languages from different groups involved in the Pacific:

- The community

Parents of the North Solomons Province in Papua New Guinea started their own village pre-school in 1979, which spread until vernacular pre-schools became government policy in the late 1980s (Wroge 2001: 169-170). In New Caledonia a 'Kanak awakening' in the 1970s included the promotion of vernacular languages (Léonard 1996: 82).

<sup>3</sup> A formal languages policy has not been developed

- The World Bank

The World Bank has been proposing language-in-education reform in Vanuatu since the early 1980s, and is backing a new education policy of vernacular medium for early primary education (Crowley 2000: 9, Tamtam 2004: 61). Similar reform has been supported in Papua New Guinea (Klaus 2003: 110).

- The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)

The Summer Institute of Linguistics helps to devise written forms of language, so that the Bible and other materials can then be translated. Summer Institute of Linguistics advisors have worked with communities to start literacy programmes in their own languages in Vanuatu (Stahl 2004) and Papua New Guinea (Nagai and Lister 2003; 2004).

- Educational leaders

The 18 Pacific educators who took part in the 2001 'Re-thinking Pacific Education' colloquium called for the support of vernacular medium education in early childhood and primary education (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki and Benson 2002: 140).

Critiques of vernacular education have also come from different sources:

- Parents

Parents were against moves in Tonga in the early 1980s to delay the start of English, and the official policies in schools are to be English-only (Thaman 1996: 131).

- Outside advisors

Reforms in Vanuatu have been opposed by some expatriates (Crowley 2000: 7), concerned about the difficulties of implementing the policies and the negative effects on learning English and French. The transition of oral traditions to literacy practices has also been questioned in Papua New Guinea (Honan 2003).

Sociolinguistic overviews of Pacific education tend to be largely pessimistic about the future of vernacular languages. Müllhäusler (1995) has identified the low status of indigenous Pacific languages in the eyes of their speakers (and also Western linguists). Mugler and Lynch (1996: 7) note that although vernacular languages are seen as culturally important, they are also perceived as having little economic value. Lotherington (1998: 72-73) calls for critical reassessment of language policies to support both home languages and school languages, stating that Pacific countries are not honestly asking themselves how much English their children really need. Mangubhai (2002: 492) points out that a reluctance to address the difference between official and actual policies must be overcome for successful forms of bilingual education to occur.

In contrast, the few in-depth studies of language attitudes have all identified the high status of English. Lameta's study in the Cook Islands identified an impending crisis for the future of Cook Island Māori dialects as parents switch to English (Syme-Buchanan 1998). White's (2003) study found an increased value of Fijian among high school students in Fiji, although English remains the language of high status. Shameem's (2004) study found positive attitudes towards all the languages in the Indo-Fijian speech repertoire, but strong support for monolingual English instruction. These studies therefore point to a complicated picture of ethnolinguistic vitality for the languages of the South Pacific, with the increasing strength of English creating a potential risk for the cognitive development of children facing an early transition to English-medium instruction, rather than an approach supporting the development of bilingualism in the children.

## Conclusion

My findings on the importance of the socio-political component of ethnolinguistic vitality in determining language policy have implications for both overseas experts and local partners in education projects in the Pacific, where there are very high levels of multilateral and bilateral development aid (Coxon and Baba 2003: 4). This means that educational knowledge in the Pacific still tends to come from foreigners, particularly aid donors, as outlined in the Vanuatu context by Sanga and Niroa (2004: 14). Taufe'ulungaki (2003: 26) points out that the development agencies all have similar goals and principles, such as those articulated in UNESCO's six Education for All (EFA) goals to be achieved by 2015. These goals emphasise the need for basic literacy, which Benson has shown links to a need for increased bilingual education (Benson 2004: 16):

Mother tongue-based bilingual education not only increases access to skills but also raises the quality of basic education by facilitating classroom interaction and integration of prior knowledge and experiences with new learning.

However, in the Pacific EFA Action Plans only the country of Sāmoa has identified a bilingual approach in response to the challenges of meeting the EFA goals (Foess, Pelto and Tait 2003: 33), and the central position of language issues in educational development continues to be neglected.

The historical implementation of education in Aotearoa New Zealand and the rest of the Pacific has focused on language from a European viewpoint, but effective education planning must reflect an understanding of the local ethnolinguistic situation. Taufe'ulungaki (2003: 38) states that externally funded research projects 'are usually used to legitimise the funding agents' own agendas and beliefs'. European-based education systems have traditionally been largely monolingual, and the complexity of the local situation may therefore be overlooked unless the good partnerships advocated by Sanga (2003) are developed. In Aotearoa New Zealand the political advocacy of Māori has led to an understanding of the importance of language in Māori development, but this understanding is only starting to extend to the place of other languages. It is based on a socio-political rather than cognitive and academic imperative.

When there is a focus on literacy and language, it may be assumed to equate to a focus on English (or other 'metropolitan' languages). An example of this is found in Gadd and Elley's (2003) statement in the context of a project to increase literacy in Tongan primary schools:

While the Tongans are proud of their language and culture, it is widely accepted that more career options and greater opportunities in life are available to those who are competent in English.

This has clear echoes of the attitudes towards Māori one hundred years ago in Aotearoa New Zealand, and parallels current attitudes towards language for immigrant children. However, as the history of te reo Māori in education shows, the relationship between English and development is not a straightforward one. There remains a need for the position of English to be problematised.

Although bilingualism is the de facto result for the children and adults in the immigrant populations in Aotearoa New Zealand - and for the children and adults of most of the South Pacific - a focus only on vernacular maintenance, or only on English acquisition, overlooks the possibility of bilingualism as an outcome. Planning for additive forms of bilingualism (or multilingualism) will provide not only social and cultural benefits for children and their communities, but also the well-proven academic and cognitive benefits.

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## The Importance of Being Equitable: Equity in Common Property Regimes

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### Introduction

'Wealth differentiation in common property? Sounds like a contradiction in terms.' This was one response to a pared-down explanation of my thesis research. It does sound contradictory. How is it that common property is said to afford equitable access to resources, yet there is (often significant) wealth differentiation among the resource users? Does this mean that common property is not equitable, or instead that equity is a more complex matter than relative wealth? What is equity, and who decides? This paper examines some of the issues in defining and assessing equity in a common property situation, drawing on research in a pastoral commons in western Mongolia,<sup>1</sup> before making any judgments on how equitable common property may in fact be.

### Common property regimes

Common property regimes (CPRs) are typically found governing complex or unpredictable resources (such as irrigation systems, forests or rangelands), where the populations using the resources are relatively stable (Ostrom 1990:88). Users can thus agree to rules limiting and controlling their use of the resource in the expectation that they will continue to benefit from it. The long term benefits of such limits, not to mention the participation implicit in communal management, mean that CPRs (often reinvented as community-based natural resource management or CBNRM) have been embraced as a means to achieve sustainable resource use.

However, the fact that users agree on rules for governing commonly-held resources is also taken to imply that the rules must be fair, otherwise the users would never abide by them (Ostrom 1990:33). It is on this basis that CPRs are said to afford equitable access to resources (Berkes and Farvar 1989:11, Gibbs and Bromley 1989:26). This claim bears investigating, given the increasing popularity of communal resource management, since it is often the least well off who rely most heavily on common resources for their livelihoods (Beck and Nesmith 2001:129, Bromley 1992:13). Yet the very fact of such differences in wealth among users seems to call into question the supposed equity of CPRs.

### Defining equity

While sometimes confused with it, economic equality is not a good definition of equity. For one thing, income inequalities are often associated with other inequalities, such as in opportunities, access to services, and especially power (Seers 1979:12,16). Chambers and Conway suggest that the scope of equity should be broadened beyond income to include 'a less unequal distribution of assets, capabilities and opportunities, and especially enhancement of those of the most deprived' (1992:6). Secondly, understanding equity to mean equality can be problematic, catering to (western) notions of egalitarianism which may be foreign to the communities in question (Wade 1992:222). It may also be imposing a bias in favour of marginalised groups, to which concerns for equity may have strong emotional ties (Jain 2002:3), as the above quotation shows. This may be consistent with a longstanding development emphasis on reducing both poverty and inequality (Galaty 1999:48, Seers 1969:3), and is perhaps no bad thing given the reliance of the poorest on common resources, but it may not figure strongly in local understandings of equity.

A better understanding of equity is fairness - fair access to resources for users, fair return for their contribution to the CPR. This is much more nuanced, although unfortunately also much more difficult to pin down and measure, depending on what have been called 'rough-and-ready' indicators (Oakerson 1992:52) - whether most users are satisfied with the rules and by implication agree that they are fair. This approach offers better possibilities for assessing equity, although it too encounters difficulties.

These different ways of evaluating equity can be illustrated using the case study of a herding community in Bayan-Ölgii *aimag*, Mongolia's westernmost province.

### Resource access in the case study

#### Background to the case study

Livestock in Mongolia have been privately owned since decollectivisation in 1991. Although pasture remains state property, there is *de facto* common tenure at the local level, with some coordination by *sum* and *bag*<sup>2</sup> governors. As in other rangeland CPRs, mobility is key to accessing different seasonal pastures, following regular movement dates set by agreement between herders and the *sum* government. The case study was a subset of *bag* #4 of Ulaan-khus *sum*, comprising a summer herding community of 60 households on Bayan mountain and about 25 related ones in the Sogoog valley below. Most moved seasonally between Bayan and Sogoog, although some had limited mobility or remained in Sogoog year round. All households in both locations were Kazak, the majority ethnic group in this *aimag*. Some 25 households had taken up herding at or since privatisation due to the fragile state of the Mongolian economy and lack of other livelihood options.

#### Access by informal agreement

Pastoral resources fell into two distinct categories, with access rights determined differently. In the first group were summer pastures on Bayan mountain and autumn pastures in Sogoog (grazed after haymaking). Herders on the mountain camped at their traditional sites or with relatives (in the case of the 'new' herders at privatisation). In both summer and autumn pastures the use of specific pasture areas by particular households was informally agreed among the herders. In both cases there was considered sufficient pasture for all users, with no significant difference in quality. Despite some differences in ease of water access on Bayan, and the acknowledgement that Sogoog was becoming crowded in autumn, there were no problems over access rights.

<sup>1</sup> Research was carried out in July and August 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Ulaan-khus *sum* (district) of Bayan-Ölgii *aimag* (province) covers approximately 6,000km<sup>2</sup> (BOAA 1990:6). In 2002, the *sum*'s population was 8,700 in 1,880 households, of which some 240 belonged to *bag* (subdistrict) #4. (Population statistics supplied by Ulaan-khus *sum* government).

### Access by formal allocation

The situation was noticeably different for the second category, which comprised mountain winter houses (and by extension winter pastures) on Bayan and haymaking land in Sogoog. Both were identified by herders as critical resources for successful herding and both were more limited than other seasonal resources. Use of mountain winter pastures helps produce fatter, healthier animals and provides shelter from the bitter winds of the Sogoog valley. While legally these pastures are open to all herders in the *sum*, in practice access is contingent on having use of a winter house. With the influx of new herders in the *sum* at privatisation, there were no longer sufficient houses for all the households requiring them. Similarly, having adequate hay is critical to animals surviving the winter, but the Sogoog hayfields are of very mixed and unreliable quality, often requiring considerable irrigation work, with insufficient productive land available for all herding households after privatisation.

Access to both winter houses and hayfields was decided not by the herders themselves but by the *bag* and *sum* governors at privatisation. There was some preference shown to ex-collective herders in the allocation of winter houses and the most productive haymaking land, although some new herders also obtained access rights, in some cases through kinship or social connections. Since this allocation by governors involved the most critical resources for successful herding, it is unsurprising that most of the dissatisfaction herders expressed over resource access concerned these two types of resources.

Further, because the allocation was done on a once-off basis, there was little room for renegotiation or dispute resolution. Theoretically more winter houses could be built, but this requires the consent of prospective neighbours, who are unlikely to give it except perhaps to close relatives. Herders saw little possibility of changing this, despite provision for a meeting of local herders to decide on such matters. A further problem is that winter pastures are beginning to resemble private property, as those with winter houses are starting to agree on (illegal) boundaries between the pastures they use, further excluding others who currently have no means of accessing them. As regards hayfield allocation, herders saw no possibility at all of resolving their dissatisfaction, since their only recourse was to the *sum* and *bag* governors, who were seen as complicit in any irregularities that might have taken place.

### Assessing equity

When it comes to assessing whether this situation is equitable, or how equitable it is, several issues may be considered.

#### Compliance and minimal conflict

Because of the claim that people will not keep to rules they do not consider fair, it is argued that compliance with the rules of a CPR and a relative lack of conflict mean that the rules are in fact fair and grant equitable access to the resource (Berkes and Farvar 1989:11, Gibbs and Bromley 1989:26). In this case, compliance with the rules for use of pastoral resources is high, with little evidence of encroachment on pastures or hayfields used by others and near universal observance of seasonal movement dates. However, this is so despite acknowledged dissatisfaction over access rights, suggesting that high levels of compliance or a lack of overt conflict are not reliable indicators that a CPR operates equitably.

#### Satisfaction with the rules

Perhaps more helpful is the suggestion that if most of the users are satisfied with the rules, this implies that the rules are fair and equitable (Oakerson 1992:52). This approach is preferable because it means asking resource users their opinions rather than making inferences from their behaviour. It also allows for the possibility that, as here, there is dissatisfaction with the rules that does not manifest itself in conflict, because there is seen to be no benefit from challenging the rules (Jain 2002:3).

Herders seemed relatively happy with the current management of resources, such as setting of seasonal movement dates, in which they participated through a *bag* meeting, or informal agreement over use of summer and autumn pasture. Instead their difficulties chiefly concerned the more limited resources of winter houses and hayfields, for which access rights had been allocated at privatisation without their input.

Herders were also much more concerned about the allocation of access rights than about the ability to realise those rights. While they recognised that wealth constraints to mobility meant poorer households faced difficulties in accessing different seasonal pastures, they did not indicate that they considered this a shortcoming in resource management or found it unfair. This suggests that, from the herders' perspective, wealth-based differences in the ability to realise access to resources do not constitute inequitable access.

#### Whose perspective?

The question of perspective is an important one, since what is 'fair' may differ with cultural background and point of view. In some situations, for example, cultural values may allow some users to benefit disproportionately from a CPR without being challenged (Jain 2002:3), although this was not the case here. Perspectives of equity may differ both between 'insiders' (the resource users) and between insiders and outsiders.

A good example of the first instance is the prioritising of ex-collective herders over 'new' herders in the distribution of winter houses and productive haymaking land. Since a herding livelihood is viewed as every Mongol's birthright, those who took up herding at privatisation could not be excluded from access to resources (Fernández-Giménez 2002:65, Mearns 1993:79). Instead the CPR<sup>3</sup> had to absorb a sudden increase in numbers of herders with the same limited resources. This may have been viewed as a temporary measure until the economy should recover; in the event, however, many of the new herders have remained in herding because there are still so few alternative livelihood options. The CPR seems to have coped with the increased numbers through prioritising access (Devereux 1996:4), in this case according to seniority in herding. Ex-collective herders were thus allocated more of the winter houses and the best haymaking land, not only on the basis of historical use, a criterion widely recognised in Mongolia (Fernández-Giménez 2002:61-63, Mearns 1993:92), but perhaps also because they were viewed as more likely to remain in herding in the longer term. It may well seem

<sup>3</sup> The term 'common property regime' (CPR) is used here to refer to governance of resources in a commons situation, even though in the case study this is a hybrid of formal and informal rules and customs, agreement between herders and state involvement through governors. It is not intended to suggest that there is a set of clearly defined or recorded rules drawn up by herders.

fair to ex-collective herders that they should have preferential access to winter houses or productive hayfields on the basis of long use; new herders who were allocated unproductive land or missed out on a house are likely to have a different view of the matter, particularly as they are still herding over ten years on from privatisation. Ostrom makes the (very obvious) point that if the rules for resource use treat two groups differently, they are likely to evaluate the rules differently (Ostrom 1990:210).

Similarly, insider and outsider perspectives on equity may differ. As noted above, herders acknowledged that the poor faced particular difficulties in accessing resources, chiefly because of wealth constraints to mobility, yet they did not appear to find this unfair or inequitable, and in general the CPR made no provision for the disadvantaged.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, 'outsider' understandings of equity often include a focus on improving the circumstances of the least well off (Chambers and Conway 1992:6, Jain 2002:3), which implies their having both rights of access and the ability to realise them. On this basis resource access which did not include both these aspects could not be considered equitable. The potential for this kind of clash in understandings of equity needs to be taken into account by those outsiders attempting to support or establish communal resource management. This does not mean it is not possible, or desirable, to extend resource users' perception of fair access to include those who are most disadvantaged, but this view cannot be imposed. Instead, there is a need for dialogue and a readiness on the part of outsiders to a community to question their views, to understand what is suited to local conditions and priorities (Chambers and Conway 1992:4) and to recognise that equity may be defined differently in different situations (Jain 2002:2-3).

### **Is the case study equitable?**

#### **Differential access rights**

Among this resource user group there were some differential access rights (refer Figure 1). These were largely based on characteristics that households were unable to change (Devereux 1996:4), such as being an ex-collective rather than a new herder, having established herding kin, or even having influential social connections, which can certainly be worked on but are not possible for everyone. While differential access rights were not systematically assigned on these bases, to the extent that they depended on such inherent characteristics, they could probably be considered inequitable. This view seemed to be shared by many of the herders, as their greatest expressed dissatisfaction was over these differences in access rights.

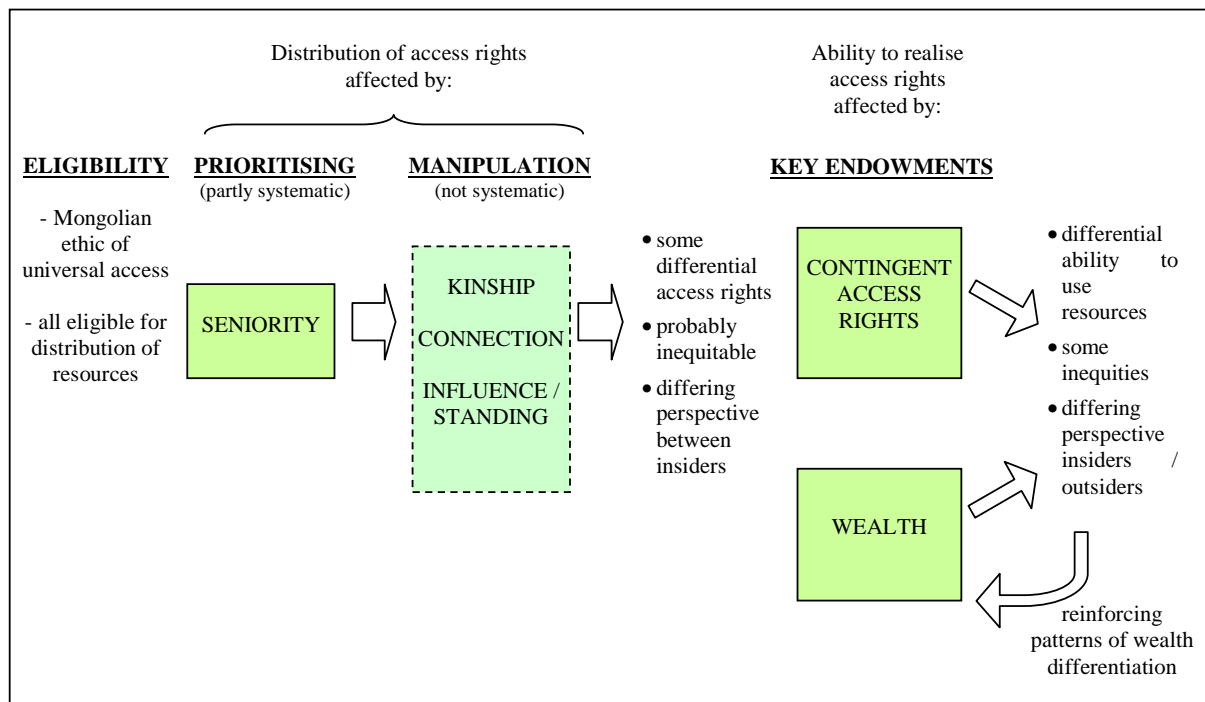
#### **Differential ability to realise access rights**

However, households also had differential ability to realise nominal access rights (Li 1996:510), which could be seen as dependent on their having certain key resource endowments (Leach et al. 1996:232). On one hand these involved contingency issues (Fernández-Giménez 2002:63), as in the case of winter pasture, where the ability to realise access to pasture was contingent on also having access rights to a winter house. As noted however, the other major constraint to realising access rights was wealth, especially as this affected mobility, with labour, income, herd size and access to transportation having particular impact. Households had varying degrees of control over these factors in relative wealth since, for example, labour availability is a factor of household life cycle, while securing access to vehicles at privatisation seemed linked to having good social connections, meaning that to some extent relative wealth was due, if not to inherent characteristics, at least to those difficult to change. Herders, however, while they recognised the difficulties faced by poorer households, seemed much more concerned about rights of access than about the ability to realise them. Thus while from one perspective wealth-based differences in the ability to use resources could be considered inequitable, not least because the poorest households encountered the greatest barriers to resource use, this view was not necessarily shared by resource users themselves.

Interestingly, relative wealth did not seem to have had any effect on the distribution of access rights. This suggests that the existence of wealth differentiation among resource users cannot necessarily be taken as an indicator of inequitable access to resources in a CPR. However, the ability to actually use resources affected herd health and herd size, which in turn impacted on household wealth and wellbeing. Thus although the CPR was not set up to automatically disadvantage the less well off, the circular relationship between wealth and resource access meant that the poor were likely to become poorer (Figure 1).

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<sup>4</sup> The singular exception was the preferential water access accorded to a few labour-deficit families in the Bayan summer pastures.

**Figure 1: Equity in resource access rights and ability to realise access****Is Common property equitable?****The effect of context**

The case study demonstrates that the context of a CPR can affect how equitable it is. This is true of both the social context and the institutional context.

**Social context**

Equity in the CPR was affected, not by any elite group, but by the absence of one. Unlike many communities described in the literature, this one was not clearly differentiated. Even the most obvious division, between new and ex-collective herders, was blurred because these groups were related and relatives tended to camp and herd together. No one group seemed able to exert influence over the operation of the CPR, either in its own direct favour, or to enlist the cooperation of others by ensuring fair access for all (Jain 2002:19, Wade 1987:104). As a result, while the CPR was not wildly inequitable, neither was it especially free of inequities. This underlines the need to take account of the community setting (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:636-7); even if it is not riven with power inequalities, for example, the specific dynamics of a community are likely to affect how equitable any CPR it operates will be.

**Institutional context**

Most inequities in this case were traceable to privatisation, rather than to the current operation of the CPR. At least two factors in this process impacted negatively on equity. First, there was a distinct lack of resource user participation in the allocation of more limited resources, which was done by *bag* and *sum* governors with almost no herder input. This is the area in which there is most sense of unfairness and least sense of being able to resolve it, for want of a workable forum in which to do so. It has not helped that allocation was done on a once-off basis, leaving little room for renegotiation, which is also leading to winter pasture starting to resemble private property, while those without winter houses are excluded. If instead herders had had to agree on how resources would be allocated, this might also have created a forum in which access could be renegotiated or disputes settled. As it is, there is no provision for either.

Secondly, there was no solid institutional framework to take over as the collective ended (Fernández-Giménez and Batbuyan 2000:2, Humphrey and Sneath 1999:69-70, 111, 333-4). The general institutional vagueness surrounding privatisation (and still continuing) allowed some individuals to manipulate the resource allocation process to obtain preferential access rights through kinship or connections (Figure 1). The lack of a forum for resource users to negotiate access rights and the fact that they did not devise many of the operational rules of the CPR could also be considered institutional failings.

The experience of this community suggests therefore that without a strong institutional framework developed for the situation by the resource users, the CPR is more open to manipulation by influential or well-connected individuals. Encouraging resource users to develop such a framework may result in more positive outcomes as far as equity is concerned.

However, these factors which seemed detrimental to equitable resource access in the case study - lack of user participation in devising and changing the rules of a CPR, and shaky institutions - are usually also considered to have an adverse effect on successful collective action in general (Ostrom 1990:90, Baland and Platteau 1996:289, 344). While this does not imply that a CPR that *is* functioning well is necessarily equitable, it does suggest that equitable resource access is that much less likely when the CPR as a whole is under stress (for example against a backdrop of economic collapse and transition as in Mongolia), and particularly when the community has limited control over the resources it uses. Shoring up the institutions for local resource management is therefore likely to also enhance possibilities for equitable access to resources.

The case study confirms that it is not possible to claim that equitable access to resources is somehow an inherent feature of a functioning CPR (regardless of how well its rules may be complied with). It is interesting that, even after several decades of socialism, which virtually enforced equality, the CPR that succeeded the collective in this community was neither egalitarian nor particularly equitable.

### What are the alternatives?

What may be said is that, in certain settings, CPRs may be more equitable than other types of property regimes, particularly private property (Quiggin 1993:1125, 1135). 'Common' property at least implies that there cannot be individual accumulation through excluding others, which has happened in parts of Africa and Inner Mongolia where private or individualised tenure has been implemented, with increasing inequities in resource access (Lane 1998:13, Williams 1996:309). This same process is also happening in the case study with winter pasture, as those with winter houses agree on boundaries to 'their' winter pastures, excluding other households even if they can afford to build houses. This can certainly not be considered equitable. Thus, while CPRs may not guarantee equal access to resources, or access to equally good resources, they can at least ensure that all members of the user group do have resource access rights. This is particularly important for those who rely most heavily on common resources (generally the poorest) or when there are no other livelihood options (Banks et al. 2003:136). In deciding whether CPRs can be considered equitable, it is thus important to take into account how equitable alternative types of property regime would be in the same context.

### Conclusion

While there are some claims in the literature that common property regimes can allow for equitable allocation of resources, this case study of a pastoral commons suggests that such claims need to be put in perspective. First, there is the question of how equity is defined and whose perspective is adopted. Second, the social context of the CPR should be taken into account - whether different groups in the user community are able to influence resource allocation either to their own advantage, or for an equitable outcome. Third, the robustness of the CPR's institutions is likely to have some bearing on how equitable it may be. Finally, while communal tenure may not be entirely equitable, in some situations it may still allow for more equitable access to resources than other types of property regime.

Pastoralism seems a good case in point. Individualised tenure in other pastoral settings outside Mongolia has permitted influential herders to exclude the least well off and has led to increased inequity. This is paralleled in the case study by boundary-setting in winter pasture, as this comes to resemble *de facto* private property and others are excluded. By contrast, even taking into account the above cautions, forms of communal tenure may serve both to check private accumulation of resources and to guarantee access to all herders in the community, including the less well off. While it is certainly not perfect therefore, in the pastoral setting common tenure may still offer the most equitable access to resources.

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