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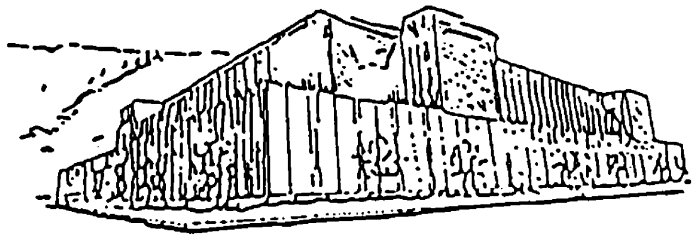
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**Ecotourism, Anthropology, and the Ecosystem  
Developing Sustainable Tourism  
Case Study -- Belize, C.A.**

by

James Anthony Flanagan

B.S., Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 1990

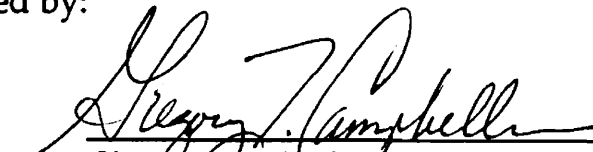
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for the degree of


Masters of Arts

University of Montana

1997

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**Ecotourism, Anthropology, and the Ecosystem:****Developing Sustainable Tourism, Case Study -- Belize, C.A. (136 pp.)**

Director: Gregory R. Campbell, PhD

Economically, international tourism has become one of the greatest forms of foreign exchange. Even though tourism is generally a developed world phenomenon, tourism to developing nations has increased dramatically. Developing nations, realizing the economic potential of tourism, are emphasizing the development or the expansion of their tourism industry. However, many of these developing nations lack the sufficient infrastructure to reap the economic benefits of tourism, thus developing nations rely on developed nations for economic support. This dependency limits the believed economic potential of tourism. Socio-cultural impacts often accompany these negative political economic factors. In order to reduce these negative consequences, developing nations are encouraging alternative forms of tourism. Alternative tourism programs, such as ecotourism, strive to alleviate negative consequences by stressing environmentally and culturally sensitive tourism. Ecotourism, or nature-oriented tourism, is one of the fastest growing and most economically successful forms of alternative tourism. Ecotourism programs claim to provide environmentally sound tourism and conservation, while incorporating and benefiting the local communities. In order to understand the positive and negative impacts of ecotourism more fully, an anthropological and ecosystem oriented perspective is necessary. While the idea of the ecosystem sets the boundary of the study, anthropology provides a diachronic, holistic, contextual, and cultural point of view. Ecotourism provides anthropology and the ecosystem perspective with the opportunity to discern the complex interrelationships between humans and the environment. Ecotourism also brings to the fore the application and praxis nature of anthropological theory, encouraging the active participation of the anthropologist in the conception and maintenance of development projects. The research conducted explores the link between the ecosystem, anthropology, and development (ch. 1); assesses the ideology of tourism (ch. 2); takes a critical view of ecotourism (ch. 3); discusses these issues within the historical and economic context of Belize, Central America (ch. 4); provides insight on the development of sustainable tourism (ch. 5); and lastly, explores the importance of the praxis application of anthropology theory in development studies (ch. 6).

## Acknowledgments

It gives me great pleasure to thank all the people involved in the creation of this document. I especially want to thank my friends from Belize, C.A., whose enthusiasm and love for their country burgeoned in me. I have a great respect for them and their country, and hope that my writings portray my reverence. Thank you - Ramon, Raphael, Vincent, Philip, Jose, and Marcello.

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**When we try to pick out anything by itself,  
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.**

-- John Muir (1838-1914), 1911  
*My First Summer in the Sierra*

**We have today the knowledge and the  
tools to look at the whole earth, to  
look at everybody on it, to look at its  
resources, to look at the state of our  
technology, and to begin to deal with  
the whole problem.**

-- Margaret Mead (1901-1978), 1970  
speech, New York City

**In our every deliberation, we must consider  
the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.**

-- from the Great Laws of the Iroquois Confederacy



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## Chapter 1

### **The Ecosystem and Development in the Context of Anthropology**

In the past few decades, international tourism became one of the primary forms of global foreign exchange, economically and culturally. According to 1992 estimates, tourism surpassed the oil market as the world's largest industry (Cater 1992: 18). These economic estimates, while impressive, are misleading. Tourism remains largely a 'first-world' phenomenon which accounts for nearly 90 percent of the world market (Tyler 1989:18). Developing nations, or impoverished countries often in debt to 'first world' nations, are realizing the economic potential of tourism, therefore many are emphasizing the development or the expansion of their present tourism industry.<sup>1</sup> Compared to developed nations, many developing nations lack the sufficient infrastructure to reap the economic benefits of large-scale tourism, remaining economically peripheral.

Substantial economic benefits of large-scale or mass tourism in developing nations can only emerge after building roads and hotels, importing foods and other consumer products as well as providing air travel and marketing. Lacking this infrastructure, developing nations depend on foreign investors, such as trans-national companies and developed nations, for support. Economic dependency causes a transfer of profit or a 'leakage' back to the developed nations, and this exaggerates the perceived benefits of tourism for developing nations (Boo 1990a; Nash 1989; Prosser 1994). In the case of many developing nations this economic transfer is significant. For example, in a tourism report to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the World

Bank estimated that nearly 55 percent of gross tourism revenues escaped developing nations (Frueh 1988 cited in Boo 1990a:13; Norris 1992; Warner 1991). Even after the creation of a tourist industry, economic profits are subject to fluctuations in popularity, the product life-cycle, seasonality, political, and economic change. (Boo 1990a:13; Butler 1991:203-204; Prosser 1994:28-29; Smith 1989:7-8). The positive socioeconomic impacts of tourism, contingent on the context of development, "frequently fall significantly short of expectations or predictions" (Cohen 1984:384).

Alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, attempt to alleviate negative impacts by stressing environmental and cultural sensitivity.<sup>2</sup> Ecotourism, or nature-oriented tourism, has been one of the fastest growing and most economically successful forms of alternative tourism (Cater 1994:73; Whelan 1991:4-5). Ecotourism programs claim to provide environmentally and culturally sound tourism and conservation, while incorporating and benefiting the local communities. However, tourism researcher Erlet Cater warns that ecotourism can have the same or even worse effects as large scale tourism, if not carefully developed and managed (Cater 1992:19; Cater 1994:80). Many tourism researchers will concur (Boo 1991; Higinio and Munt 1993; Jones 1993; Prosser 1994; Whelan 1991). Cater elaborates, stating

It is often undeveloped areas, all the more vulnerable to disruption and degradation, that are being drawn into the international tourism circuit. The multitude of interests scattered at the local scale may penetrate the socio-cultural and environmental fabric more deeply than conventional tourism and will probably be more difficult to control. (Cater 1994:80).

Nevertheless, Cater claims that this does not discount ecotourism as a form of sustainable development, and emphasizes that successful ecotourism requires satisfying the interests of local communities (Cater 1994:80). Thus, it is crucial

to understand the factors involved while developing and maintaining ecotourism projects.

Primarily, tourism researchers have concentrated on the relationship between environmental conservation and tourism, hoping to benefit the local populations in the process. Researchers have discussed the importance of local involvement for developing successful tourism projects, but have overlooked the complex dynamics of the local culture (Cater 1994:84 on de Kadt; de Kadt 1992:72-73).

If the role of local participation is neglected in developing ecotourism, the full potential of ecotourism will not be realized. In order to create a sustainable form of ecotourism, there needs to be an understanding of the interrelationships between tourism, the environment, and culture. It is in discerning these interrelationships that an anthropological perspective will contribute to the study of ecotourism.

### **Objectives**

In the article, "Tourism as an Anthropological Subject," (1981), Dennison Nash demonstrates that anthropological inquiry enhances tourism research, since tourism revolves around core issues of anthropological thought; such as travel, culture contact, development, and the pre-industrial world (Nash 1981). The study of ecotourism also centers directly around these issues, thus the role of anthropology in ecotourism development is crucial.

An anthropological perspective incorporates the cultural dimension, critical to ecotourism development, without losing site of the political economic, historical, and environmental context. Therefore, the overall goal of the current research is to enhance the potential for ecotourism by

determining the factors involved in creating successful ecotourism projects, and addressing the negative aspects.

To obtain this goal it is necessary to understand ecotourism in the context of development. However, before specific issues of ecotourism can be addressed, a discussion of how ecotourism fits in a broader economic perspective of development, especially in the context of tourism, is necessary. A general understanding of the complex dynamics of the tourism industry provides the framework to view ecotourism as a component of economic development, therefore, identifying the specific goals of ecotourism becomes the next task. Using the goals of ecotourism as a guide, the factors necessary to create a successful form of ecotourism can be ascertained. Testing the viability of ecotourism's ideals requires a specific case study. For the purpose of this research, the historical and political economic development of Belize, C.A. will provide an excellent setting in which to view the effectiveness of ecotourism programs. From the historical and political economic discussion of Belize, structural inequalities appear to inhibit the success of ecotourism projects. Once these deterrent factors are discerned, recommendations can be made to ameliorate ecotourism projects, locally and globally.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

In order to understand the role of ecotourism in the context of sustainable development, it is necessary to identify the salient factors involved. Identifying these factors, cannot be successfully accomplished using one theory, therefore this process requires a multi-theoretical perspective. By using the concept of the ecosystem, in conjunction with the premises of ecological anthropology, and Karl Marx's materialist conception

of history, the factors fundamental to studies of sustainable development emerge, allowing for an integrated, diachronic, holistic, and contextual perspective for discerning the processes of change.

Understanding the relationship between humans and the environment is integral to the study of anthropology as well as ecotourism. In anthropology, Franz Boas, the father of American Anthropology, discussed the environment as an important factor in the development of culture (Boas 1940:266; Langness 1987:68-69; Moran 1990a:9). However, it was not until the mid-century studies of Julian Steward that ecological issues were brought to the fore of anthropological research (Bennett 1976:2). Steward's cultural ecology focused on people's ability to adapt to their environments through culture (Steward 1955). Culture, in the context of cultural ecology, "functions as a dynamic means of adapting to the surroundings" (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis 1992:370). Steward's theories influenced a variety of research in what has become known as ecological anthropology (Bennett 1976; Harris 1979; Moran 1990; Rappaport 1967; Vayda 1969).

Clifford Geertz (1963) recognized early the importance of the ecosystem concept as a unit of analysis in social/cultural anthropology (Moran 1990b:284). Geertz noted that the "concept of an ecosystem thus emphasized the *material interdependencies* among the group of organisms which form a community and the relevant physical features of the setting in which they are found, and the scientific task becomes one of *investigating the internal dynamics* of such systems and the ways in which they develop and change" (Geertz 1963:3; emphasis added). The concept of the ecosystem, as defined here, provides several important elements to the study of ecotourism. The ecosystem concept concentrates on the interactions between variables within



a given ecosystem, therefore it is important to understand how ecotourism articulates with other variables such as political economy, the environment, and culture. As a result, identifying the myriad of factors contributing to change will aid in understanding ecosystem, and ecotourism, dynamics. Once these internal interdependencies and the processes of change are recognized, a sustainable form of ecotourism can be developed. Furthermore, viewing the ecosystem as the dynamic of continuous change, not merely a homeostatic equilibrium, focuses on the fluidity of an ecosystem and a holistic understanding of change. The ecosystem concept provides a framework of study, "regarding the ecosystem not as an objectively real entity, but rather as an analytical concept for dealing with interactions of different organisms of different species living together in restricted spaces" (Vayda and McCay 1975 as cited in Vayda 1993:68). This statement is not discounting the material factors involved in the study of an ecosystem, however it is extending the role of the ecosystem as a heuristic device, "encouraging us to think in terms of the systematic interrelationships among cultural and natural factors" (Jochim 1990:75).

Using the ecosystem concept as an encompassing framework enhances the studies of ecological anthropology. According to Benjamin S. Orlove, ecological anthropology attempts to understand the synchronic and diachronic relationship between environmental and cultural systems, from a materialist perspective (Orlove 1980:235). The broad definition and goals of ecological anthropology provided by Orlove states:

Ecological anthropology may be defined as the study of the relations among the population dynamics, social organization, and culture of human populations and the environments in which they live. It includes comparative research as well as analyses of specific populations from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. In many cases, systems of production constitute important links among population dynamics, social organization, culture, and environment. Defined as such, ecological anthropology provides a materialist examination of the large range of human activity and thus bears an affinity to other materialistic approaches in the social and biological sciences. (Orlove 1980:235).

Thus, the scope of ecological anthropology considers a variety of factors in the development of anthropological theory. The key elements of ecological studies bring to the fore the importance of diachronic studies, materialist perspectives, and the focus on interactions.<sup>3</sup>

Moran (1990a) credits recent ecosystem studies in ecological anthropology for contributing "to the demise of environmental and cultural deterministic approaches" by focusing on "complex links of mutual causality" and "relational and interactional" factors (Moran 1990a:15). Current studies in ecological anthropology focus on the ecosystem, as an encompassing concept containing complex interactional systems, and therefore, the ecosystem is viewed as the dynamic interplay of systems or the dialectic of nature. Thus, ecosystem studies should be concerned with the interactive variables, not merely the results of the interactions. Understanding the interactions between different variables provides a holistic perspective and methodology to interpret human-environment interrelationships, such as ecotourism. Human-environmental interactions also are critical to the study of ecotourism, therefore theories of ecological anthropology can benefit the understanding of ecotourism dynamics.

Since the ecosystem is an interactional system of constant and continual change, over time, not the result of the interactions, a historical conception of the ecosystem aids in understanding modern interactions. Stephen Boyden (1993) emphasizes the historical dimension of ecosystem studies, stating:

this is not only because past impacts of culturally-inspired activities of humans are often important influences on the ecological dynamics of an existing system, but also because understanding of previous interactions between culture and nature can provide useful insights of relevance to some of the critical issues facing humanity in the modern world. (Boyden 1993:75-76).

By recognizing the interactional variables in a diachronic perspective, anthropologists gain insight to the processes of change, allowing for a better opportunity to integrate theory and practice. As Eleanor Leacock argued, "change is inherent in historical processes" and the dialectic stresses "the processes rather than the mere results of change" helping to "distinguish between quantitative changes (or changes in degree) and qualitative changes (or changes of kind)" (Wessman 1981:6-7). When viewing the ecosystem as the interplay of systems or dialectic of nature, historical factors and the processes of change help discern human-environment interrelationships.

Bertell Ollman suggests that dialectics aid in determining modern interrelationships by identifying the historical processes of variables and placing them in a broader interactive context (Ollman 1993:11). The interplay and interactions between variables, or dialectic, needs to be understood on a historical and ecosystematic context. Leacock's and Ollman's observations stress the historical processes of interactional variables, thus emphasizing a Marxian perspective. Marx's materialists conception of history examines the

historical processes of accumulation, in which hegemonic powers dominate the global political economic context (Gills and Frank 1993:81-114). According to Barry Gills and Andre Gunder Frank, a 'historical-materialist political economy' needs to consider the interactions between ecological, biological, cultural, ideological, political, and economic factors when understanding world systems history (Gills and Frank 1993:109). Thus the interactions between political economic, cultural, and environmental factors need to be understood on a historical, as well as a modern context. Therefore, by identifying the historical processes of structural inequalities found in contemporary societies, researchers can recognize the political economic, cultural, and environmental interactions leading to unsustainable or inequitable relationships. Once these unsustainable relationships are recognized on a contextual, as well as broader ecosystem context, policies can be developed to address the negative consequences of sustainable development, and therefore ecotourism.

## Endnotes for Chapter 1:

<sup>1</sup> The general definition of developing nations used here is based on Bodley 1997:354-390.

<sup>2</sup> For a complete discussion of alternative forms of tourism see *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*, edited by Valene L. Smith and William R. Eadington, 1992, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> In his 1980 article "Ecological Anthropology," Orlove traces the history and development of ecological studies in anthropology through a series of reactionary stages: starting with the studies of Julian Steward and Leslie White, moving into neofunctionalism and neoevolutionism, then into processual ecological anthropology. Only a basic outline of this article is necessary for this discussion. For a full account of Orlove's article see Orlove 1980: 235-273 or Young 1983:261-299.

As previously mentioned, Steward's multilineal evolutionary studies of cultural ecology aspired to discover cross-cultural regularities, determining how culture is affected by environmental factors. On the other hand, White, also interested in cultural evolution, emphasized a unilineal model of evolution based on the harnessing or efficient use of energy (Garbarino 1977:88; Orlove 1980:238; White 1959). Unlike Steward, White was searching for universal aspects of cultural evolution not specific adaptations (Orlove 1980). These theories set the foundation for further investigations of human-environment interaction.

During the second stage of ecological anthropology, the paradigms set forth by Steward and White, were contested by neoevolutionists and neofunctionalists. The neoevolutionists combined Steward's and White's theories suggesting two forms of cultural evolution general and specific (Bennett 1976:47; Garbarino 1977:90-91; Sahlins and Service 1960 as discussed by Service 1962:5). General evolution refers to "broad, unidirectional evolutionary trends" (Bennett 1976:123) as established by White, while specific evolution focused on the adaptive changes of particular groups to their surrounding environment, as found in Steward's work (Garbarino 1977:90-91; Service 1962:5).

Neofunctionalists, unlike the neoevolutionist, distinguished themselves from the evolutionary theories of Steward and White by concentrating on the "social organization and culture of specific populations as functional adaptations which permit the populations to exploit their environments successfully without exceeding carrying capacity" (Orlove 1980: 240). Thus, neofunctionalists focus on a population's ability in adapting to and changing their environment. From a methodological standpoint, neofunctionalists stress quantitative data, and borrowed heavily from population ecology, using terms such as niche, adaptation, and carrying capacity (Orlove 1980:241). Neofunctional studies demonstrate a scientific view of cultural change as exemplified by Marvin Harris' cultural materialism (1979), emphasizing techno-environmental factors and population pressures (Orlove 1980:240), and Roy Rappaport's (1967) *Pigs for the Ancestors*, which stressed the role of energy efficiency and homeostatic equilibrium in understanding cultural change.

The third stage of ecological anthropology called processual ecological anthropology attempts to minimize the problems associated with both the neoevolutionary and neofunctional debates as well as the works of White and Steward. Processual ecological anthropology emphasizes the need to focus on diachronic variables and the mechanisms of change (Orlove 1980:245). Processual studies draw from actor-based models in which the processes and especially the outcomes of individual decision-making are central to understanding the mechanisms of change (Orlove 1980:247-248). Orlove suggests that processual studies are bridging the gap between ecological anthropology and biological ecology by questioning the stability of ecosystems, considering the role of individuals, and challenging the regularity of systems-based models (Orlove 1980:249).

## Chapter 2

### **The Ideology of Tourism**

Before specific issues of ecotourism are addressed it is necessary to understand how ecotourism fits within the context of economic development, specifically tourism. As an industry, tourism is a unique blend of socio-cultural, political economic, and environmental factors. The tourism industry combines a variety of industrial sectors, therefore, presents a quandary when discussing or classifying forms of economic development. Since tourism integrates various industries, it is subject to the trends and exogenous factors of these diverse economic sectors, including monetary exchange rates, transportation costs, import-export trade, and construction. Tourism also shares some of the positive and negative impacts these industries have on economic development, especially in developing nations. Complicating the elaborate interactions, tourism varies according to additional factors such as location, style of tour, climate, and season. Therefore, tourism's unique situation within a broader economic context requires a more critical understanding and discussion. While many of the critiques presented will parallel criticisms of economic development in general, by concentrating specifically on tourism provides further insight to the development of ecotourism programs.

Even though ecotourism differentiates itself as an environmentally and culturally sensitive style, as a specific type of tourism, it will resemble some of the characteristics of the tourism industry. This chapter will highlight the variables integral to the study of tourism in a broader

development context, therefore, benefiting the understanding of ecotourism. These issues include the continued growth economic position and meaning of tourism, understanding the tourist, and recognizing the impacts of tourism. Once these issues are examined, the last section discusses the development and tenets of alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism.

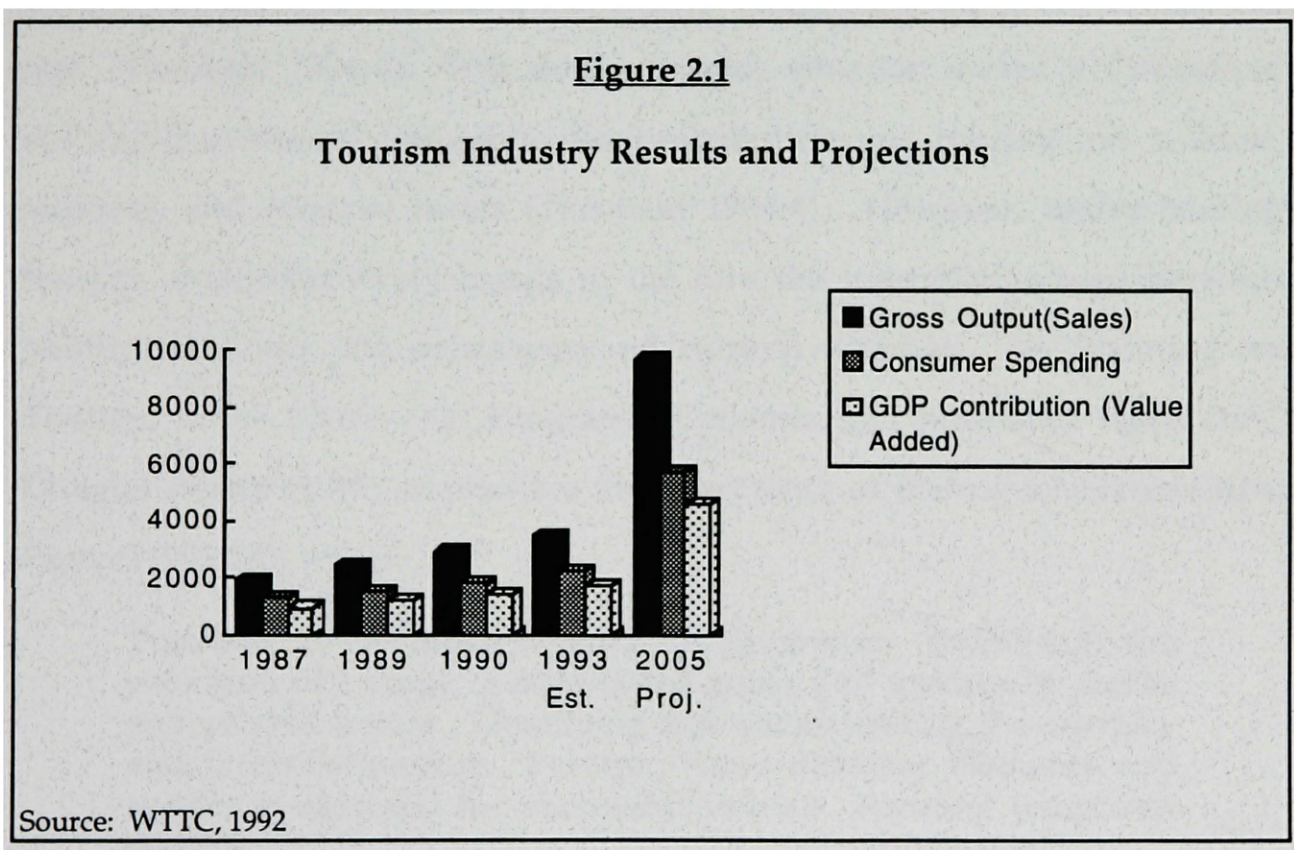
### **Tourism, Growth, and Economic Position**

Tourism, one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world, has emerged as a significant means of foreign and domestic exchange. Since the advent of the passenger jet airplane in the 1950's, tourism has grown nearly 1,600 percent (Theobald 1994:1; World Tourism Organization as cited in Tyler 1989:18). By 1992, tourism expanded to become the world's largest industry. The World Travel and Tourism Commission (WTTC) estimated that tourism accounted for a gross economic output of \$3.5 trillion, 12 percent of all consumer spending, six percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product, and a capital investment of nearly \$422 billion (WTTC 1992; Theobald 1994:4; Hawkins 1994:262).

Charles Tyler (1989, also see Tallantire 1993) explains that the explosive growth rate in tourism is related to several key factors. First of all, there has been an increase in personal income and leisure time, especially in industrialized nations. Second, the transportation industry discovered more efficient and affordable means of travel, including fuel efficient wide body jets as well as an increase in car ownership. Third, the attitudes toward travel and tourism have become more favorable, partially due to the decrease in travel costs and the increase ease in making travel plans. Thus more people are

willing to travel to distant places and for some sectors of society, traveling has become an essential part of their lifestyle. (Tyler 1989).

Tourism continues to grow and change. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), WTTC, and others, the tourist industry is projected to grow by approximately 4-5 percent, per year, nearly doubling by the twenty-first century (Pearce 1995a:229; Hawkins 1994:262; Norris 1992:32; the Economist Intelligence Unit as cited in the Economist 1989) see Figure 2.1..



These statistics and projections suggest that tourism will remain the leading industry, over other world industries such as auto, steel, agriculture, electronic, and oil, for years to come (Hawkins 1994:262; Cater 1992:18). Tourism envelops many industrial categories, including accommodations, transportation, attractions, gift shops, and food services as well as fore



mentioned (Theobald 1994:4). According to Thomas Lea Davidson, tourism "is a social/economic phenomenon that acts both as an engine of economic progress and as well as a social force" (Davidson 1994:24, 26). From this point of view, Davidson characterizes tourism, not as an industry, but as an industrial sector impacting a variety of different industries (Davidson 1994:26). Thus tourism needs to be viewed in a much broader context. A difficulty in understanding tourism in a broader context is complicated by the fact that these industries not only serve the tourists, but the local residents as well (Theobald 1994:4). This dual economic situation makes it difficult to accurately estimate the economic contributions of tourism on a local, regional, and national levels (Theobald 1994:4). However, understanding tourism comprehensively brings to the fore the interrelationships between political economy, the ecosystem, and cultural variables. In "Planning for Tourism in the 1990's: An Integrated, Dynamic, and Multiscale Approach," Douglas Pearce (1995) emphasizes the importance of these interrelationships. Pearce (1995:230) writes:

Tourism is a multi-faceted phenomenon involving the provision of a range of interrelated goods and services by public and private sectors. Identifying and understanding the *interplay* and *interrelationships* between these different elements and sectors is essential for successful tourism planning (emphasis added).

Following Pearce's view of tourism, it is necessary to understand the components of tourism, the factors of change, the various interests involved, and how these factors interact, before tourism planning can be addressed or a successful form of tourism developed.

## Meaning of Tourism

Due to the complexity of interactional factors, a precise definition of tourism eludes tourism researchers.<sup>1</sup> William Theobald (1994) identifies two categories of definitions commonly used to define tourism. Conceptual definitions "attempt to provide a theoretical framework which identify the essential characteristics of tourism and what distinguishes it from similar, sometimes related, but different activities" (Theobald 1994:7). On the other hand, technical definitions attempt to provide a standardization of statistical and legislative variables for comparative purpose. An anthropological definition of tourism leans toward a conceptual use of the term, however, statistical variables are needed to understand the political and economic dimensions of tourism. Thus an anthropological study of tourism needs to integrate the conceptual and technical definitions in order to gain a holistic understanding. A broad definition allows an anthropologist to emphasize the political, economic, historical, and environmental context that surrounds tourism, without losing sight of the global picture.<sup>2</sup> Tourism for the purposes of anthropological research can be defined as "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs" (Mathieson and Wall, 1982 as cited in Gunn 1994:5).<sup>3</sup>

Since this broad definition of tourism includes business travel, it is necessary to further define tourism by understanding the tourist. Specifically, Valene Smith identifies the tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing

change" (V.L. Smith 1989:1). Even though Smith's observation narrows the general definition of tourism by focusing on voluntary leisure time travel, additional understanding of the tourist is necessary.

### **Defining the Tourist**

At the core of any tourism definition are the motives and practices of tourists (Nash 1981:461-2). Valene Smith identifies three essential elements enabling prospective tourists to travel; leisure time, discretionary income, and positive local sanctions (Smith, V. 1989). Leisure time describes time available while not at work or other required activity.<sup>4</sup> Discretionary income, or disposable income, represents money not used for necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter; making it available for luxury use, such as leisure time travel. The final component of Smith's essential elements, positive local sanctions, refers to travel as a culturally appropriate use of time and resources, specifically within the context of leisure and discretionary income (Smith, V. 1981:475).<sup>5</sup> When these three elements exist, the tourist is more likely to travel, however, these elements do not completely address the motivations and types of travel that occur.

Motivations for travel vary greatly. John Lea (1988) identified four fundamental categories that encompass the diversity of motivational factors: physical, cultural, personal, and prestige. Physical motivations for travel satisfy the tourists basic needs including replenishing energies lost in the work-world (Graburn 1989), participating in sports and health activities, as well as pursuing entertainment and pleasure. Second, when motivated by cultural incentives, a tourist attempts to placate their curiosity of exotic cultures, places, and events by traveling to mysterious places, participating in

unique events, or observing indigenous peoples and animals. A third category, personal motivations, comprises activities such as visiting friends and relatives, searching for spirituality, satisfying the need for change, and enjoying the excitement of travel. Last, traveling for the sake of prestige and status externalizes a travelers need to acquire hands-on education, to capture their adventures through photographs and stories, to improve their status in the eyes of their peers.<sup>6</sup> From these four basic motivational categories, researchers can better identify the types of tourism in which people participate.

Understanding the motivational factors of tourists provides vital information for examining tourist behaviors and travel choices. While it is nearly impossible to discuss the extent of travel choices made by individual tourists, there are two types of tourist typologies that serve as beneficial tools: cognitive-normative models and interactional models (see Murphy 1985; Lea 1988). Cognitive-normative models separate travelers by emphasizing the motivations behind travel, as discussed in the previous paragraph, while interactional models stress the interaction between tourists and their host destinations (Murphy 1985:5).<sup>7</sup>

Since the interactional models attempt to define the "market characteristics and symptoms of travel," not the causes of travel, in determining the demands set forth by tourists, the type of travel they take, and the interactions between hosts and guests, an example of one such model is provided in Table 2.1. (Murphy 1985:5-6).

## Table 2.1

### Valene Smith's Typologies

#### Styles of Tourism\*

##### Ethnic Tourism:

Provides the tourist with the opportunity to travel 'off the beaten path,' experiencing exotic cultures, rituals and environments.

##### Cultural Tourism:

Allows the tourist to capture vanishing life-styles on film, purchase local hand-made crafts, view festivals and folklore performances.

##### Historical Tourism:

Often emphasizes education through viewing monuments, ruins, cathedrals, and museums read about in books or seen on film.

##### Environmental Tourism:

Allows tourists to travel into remote areas and view exotic landscapes and local peoples adaptation to their unique surroundings (emphasizing the natural setting).

##### Recreational Tourism:

Emphasizes the indulgence of local hospitality and is often associated with the sea, sun, sand, and sex.

\* These categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and many tourists attempt to take in as much as possible at their chosen destination

#### Types of Tourists\*

##### Explorers:

- only a small number of tourists fit this category
- arrive in very small numbers
- are in search of new knowledge
- compared to anthropologist
- adapt willingly to local customs, conditions, and accommodations.

##### Elite Tourists:

- Travel in small numbers often on a specialized tour.
- are in search of the ultimate, exotic travel experience, not education
- tolerate 'primitive' accommodations for a short time in order to get the unique experience they desire.

##### Off-beat Tourists:

- small in number but more visible
- search to avoid the crowds and travel to places 'off the beaten path'
- adapt well to simple facilities and accommodations set up for occasional travelers.

##### Unusual Tourists:

- travel with an organized tour that sometimes venture to 'isolated' areas
- enjoy viewing 'primitive' cultures but are not interested in participating
- adapt less than the previously described tourist types.

##### Incipient Mass Tourists :

- travel alone or by groups at a steady flow to tourism destinations
- search for popular destinations, use guided tours, and modern hotels
- seek Western-style amenities

##### Mass Tourists:

- a continual flow of people
- travel with a variety styles and budgets but generally expect Western amenities and trained multi-lingual hotel and tourist staffs.

##### Charter Tourists:

- arrive 'en mass,' continually
- travel as part of large travel package tours, with set itinerary
- demand Western amenities and to be catered to by tourist staffs.

Source: Smith, V. 1989

Smith's interactional model separates tourist into seven categories, emphasizing their experience desired and their ability to adapt to local conditions (Murphy 1985; Lea 1988; Pearce, P.L. 1994; Prosser 1995). Smith's tourist typology identifies the expectations held by travelers as well as their general demands on the host communities. Understanding the motivational factors and tourists demands provides researchers with critical information in identifying the compatibility between host destinations and the type of incoming tourists, or guests.

### **Impacts on Developing Nations: The Sociocultural Context**

There are a variety of positive as well as negative consequences for host countries and communities associated with the tourism industry. These impacts are separated into several interrelated primary categories: sociocultural, political economic, and environmental. In the case of developing nations, the perceived benefits of tourism are often misleading, especially in the initial stages of development. Drawing from the motivational factors and tourist typology models, incorporating known consequences of tourism, researchers and administrators can develop a more sustainable form of tourism.

Host-guest interactions, discussed commonly in tourism research, are associated with a multitude of sociocultural changes. For example, Erik Cohen identifies ten major topics of sociocultural impacts found in tourism literature: community involvement in wider framework, the nature of interpersonal relations, the bases of social organization, the rhythm of social life, migration, the division of labor, stratification, the distribution of power, deviance, cultural customs, and the arts (Cohen 1984:385-6). While these

general topics appropriately categorize the positive and negative effects on tourists and the host communities, a full discussion is unnecessary here. It is important, however, to understand the relationship between hosts, guests, and sociocultural change. Becoming aware of host-guest interactions over time provides the opportunity to confront negative problems before they can arise.

G.V. Doxey developed an 'index of tourist irritation' or irridex model that traces the attitudes of locals towards tourists over time (1975 cited in Murphy 1985, Prosser 1994). Doxey identifies a four step process showing a continual decline in locals perceptions of tourists as numbers and time increase (Table 2.2).<sup>8</sup> The irridex model can be related to Smith's typologies discussed earlier (1989, Table 2.1).

In comparing these models several hypothetical observations can be made. It is expected that the Explorer and Elite type tourists enter the local community at the beginning of the irridex model or the Euphoric stage. At this early stage of the tourism process the local population greets the Explorer and Elite tourists with enthusiasm, thus both groups benefit from the interaction. As time passes and other tourist types learn of the exciting opportunities discovered by the Explorers and Elites, more tourists enter the community.

With the new influx of tourists the local perceptions begin to change from Euphoric to Apathy to Irritation and, eventually, to Antagonism. Thus, according to the models, Mass and Charter tourists, who enter the tourism process late, find themselves viewed with resentment by the local inhabitants. The local's perceptual change and the changes in tourist types show a pattern of high local participation at the beginning, which slowly

dissipates into superficial interactions by the time the Charter tourists' arrival.

**Table 2.2**

**Doxey's index of tourist irritation - irridex model**

**TIME**  
(beginning of process)

**1. Euphoria**

- Enthusiasm for tourist development
- Mutual feeling of satisfaction
- Opportunities for local participation
- Flows of money and interesting contacts

**2. Apathy**

- Industry expands
- Tourists taken for granted
- More interest in profit making
- Personal contact becomes more formal

**3. Irritation**

- Industry nearing saturation point
- Expansion of facilities required
- Encroachment into local way of life

**4. Antagonism**

(later in the process)

- Irritations become more overt
- The tourist is seen as the harbinger of all that is bad
- Mutual politeness gives way to antagonism

**5. Final Level**

- Environment has changed irreversibly
- The resource base has changed and the type of tourist has also changed
- If the destination is large enough to cope with mass tourism it will continue to thrive

Source: Prosser 1994:30

Smith's Tourist Typology and Doxey's Irridex models are cited widely in tourism literature, however, criticisms occur due to their unilinear



progression, unclear demarcation between stages, and the lack of specific examples (Murphy 1985; Pearce, P.L. 1995). Another criticism has been that these models have concentrated too heavily on the effects of tourist numbers in local communities, resembling carrying capacity studies.<sup>9</sup>

While these criticisms are warranted, the use of Smith's and Doxey's models are evident in tourism studies (Pearce, P.L. 1995:115 disagrees). Most importantly, Smith's and Doxey's models raise significant questions about the ethics of tourism and the extant cultural gap between hosts and guests (Prosser 1992 in 1994:29). It is in understanding the variety of traveler types, the possible host-guest interactions, perceptions, and their potential impacts that these models are useful.

Even though positive sociocultural impacts of tourism occur, negative repercussions receive most of the researchers' attention. When local tourism conditions suggest positive results, negative impacts often appear as well. For example, tourism is heralded as an opportunity to promote goodwill, understanding, and peace between nations, however, this is not always the case.<sup>10</sup> Brian Archer and Chris Cooper stress that local cultural practices and tourists' behaviors do not necessarily mesh, thus most negative host-guest interactions are "exacerbated because tourist, by definition, [are] strangers in the destination" (Archer and Cooper 1994:81-2).

While the host-guest interactions can create tensions, as suggested in Doxey's irridex model, the process of increasing tensions is case specific. Some residents, for example, of the Cook Islands oppose projects for tourism development; claiming tourism disrupts and desecrates sacred sites (Pearce, H. 1993). In this situation, the local perceptions concerning tourism start at the Antagonistic phase of the irridex model, thus any further development of

tourism causes high tensions within the community and meets with direct opposition.

Tourism is blamed further for changes in social stratification, placing an emphasis on economic factors over traditional forms, such as birth rites and clan memberships (Cohen 1984:386). An economic based, class structure, often results, separating the community, and changing cultural means of social organization. Tourism has been castigated for the commodification of culture and the arts (Cohen 1984:387; also see Cohen 1988 and Greenwood 1989). Commodification is the "process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services)" (Cohen 1988:378). Examples of cultural commodification, or commercialization, include, changing traditional dances and rituals, turning ceremonies into staged performances, and altering arts and crafts, to gain an economic a profit from tourists. (Cohen 1984, 1988; Machlis and Burch 1983).

Commodification is exhibited in Panama, where the Cuna Indians have developed co-ops to mass produce their unique traditional fabrics to sell to tourists (Swain 1989). Although selling traditional patterns is profitable for the local community, a loss of distinctive lifestyles, giving their community meaning, can be detrimental to their cultural beliefs and practices (Stancliffe 1992:17). The Cuna Mola cloths have become the means to economic subsistence for a family, converting the family into a production unit, in which the wife makes the cloths and the husband sells the finished good in the a nearby city. Mola cloths are also losing ideological meaning because, 'modernized' younger women reject the traditional art and refuse to make or accept molas as gifts (Swain 1989:94-5). If this trend continues, molas will

become artifacts of the past. Sociocultural changes can effect the unique social fabric of tourism communities, often restructuring the traditional activities and values set in place decades, even centuries before the implementation of tourism.

### **Impacts on Developing Nations: The Political and Economic Context**

Tourism impacts the political and economic structures of host countries; locally, nationally, and internationally. There is no doubt that tourism increases foreign economic exchange. For instance, Kenya, relies heavily on the tourist trade, which earns roughly \$350 million annually (Whelan 1991:5). Tourism, not only increases revenues, but it diversifies a country's economic base, providing new industrial opportunities (Boo 1990a:xiv).

Tourism contributes to the development of infrastructure, which benefits other industries, and creates jobs, especially in less developed regions of the host country (Archer and Cooper 1995:76). For example, Cancun, Mexico was once a small village, but since the advent of tourism it has developed into a major center of 300,000 people (WTO 1991 cited in Schlüter 1994:255). Cancun's dramatic population growth suggests an increased development of infrastructure, to accommodate the residents as well as tourists. For instance, building a hotel for tourism requires workers to build, and creates a demand for related services such as souvenir shops, taxi services, restaurants, and tourist guides, creating jobs directly and indirectly (Economist 1989:19). On a national level, exchanges of goods and services, such as concrete and architectural design, not locally available, are increased.

Infrastructural developments generally require a foreign source of funds, thus increasing foreign investments and economic exchanges.

Economic growth, stimulated by infrastructural development and tourism, has a multiplier effect. The multiplier effect is described as the number of times, money is re-circulated into the local economy (Murphy 1985:89-92). Ideally, the longer the money stays in the local community, the more self-sufficient the community becomes, thus relying less on imported products and services. However, portions of the initial tourist revenues are bound to escape through taxes, payments for trade items, and imported services.

While the economic benefits of tourism seem obvious, the potential of tourism as a mechanism of development has been questioned by tourism researchers (Archer and Cooper 1995:77). In general, tourism is dependent on several uncontrollable factors, such as currency fluctuations, weather, individual choice, political instability, making it an unstable source of income (Boo 1990a:xiv). Thus, an economy based around tourism, including jobs, often follows a seasonal pattern (Smith, V. 1989). Jobs, created to fit the tourism economy, are often service oriented and part-time, which may take residents out of other sectors of the economy, such as subsistence agriculture, and have little effect on the overall unemployment of the region (Lea 1988:47-8). The influx of tourism also has attributed to inflated prices for land, goods and services in the local community, often above what the residents can afford (in Swaziland, Lea 1988; in Tonga, Urbanowicz 1989; in Mauritius, Pearce, H. 1993; in Belize, Cater 1994).

Tourism industries, especially in developing nations, are often developed and controlled by industrialized nations such as Germany,

England, Japan, and the United States. Developed nations control the transportation needs for tourism, including airlines and travel agencies (Dogan 1989:219). With the development of the tourism industry under the control of developed nations, dependency and structural underdevelopment can occur, hindering the political and economic autonomy of the developing nation (Cohen 1984:384 interpreting others).

Economic losses are visible in developing nations. For example, in the Seychelles, it was learned that more than half of the income earned by hotels left the islands in the "form of direct return on investment, payment for imported goods and services, or compensation for expatriate staff" (Pearce, H. 1993). Other economic losses appear as repayments of loans, multi-national ownership of hotels and lands, and travel packages bought through agencies based in industrialized nations. Tourism, thus, can be seen as a new form of economic colonialism or underdevelopment (Dogan 1989:219; Prosser 1994:28).

### **Impacts on Developing Nations: The Environmental Context**

The third classification of tourism impacts is environmental change. As with political economic and sociocultural impacts, environmental impacts are both positive and negative. The foremost positive environmental effect of tourism emanates as the protection of ecosystems increases (Archer and Cooper 1995:85). Tourists often visit countries for their aesthetic natural beauty, thus many countries have developed plans to protect environments by forming national parks, national forests, and biosphere reserves. However, protection does not always save environments from tourism's destruction. Tourism increases the need for infrastructure. Infrastructural

development, such as building hotels, and roads often cause permanent environmental damage and result in the destruction of potential natural or agricultural land (Lea 1988:55). Once built, hotels for example, may overload the environment with residual products such as waste, sewage, and pollution (Romeril 1989:105; Lea 1988: 56; Archer and Cooper 1995:84).

Tourists, themselves, cause many negative pressures on the viewed environments. Tourists are guilty of damaging coral reefs, littering forests, and overusing sensitive areas (Romeril 1989:105; Lea 1988:56; Archer and Cooper 1995:84). Environmental ignorance can lead to increased local ecological extinctions, direct destruction of habitat, the introduction of disease, and acceleration of erosion. Costa Rica, often proclaimed as an example of positive environmental interactions with tourists and tourism, also exemplifies several specific negative tourist impacts including: camping at Manuel Antonio National Park has been prohibited due to pollution; deterioration of trails and surrounding vegetation has occurred at the Monteverde Reserve and general overuse has caused birds and animals to migrate further into the jungles (Budowski, T. 1992:58; also see Norris 1994). Overall, tourists continually are chastised for "loving nature to death," and causing destruction without understanding their contribution to the environmental loss.

Sociocultural, political economic, and environmental factors are key variables in the development of sustainable tourism. Careful examination of these variables needs to take place at all stages of tourism development. It is essential to address the negative impacts of tourism and tourists without disrupting the positive contributions of the tourist industry.

## Alternative Tourism

Alternative tourism has arisen to confront the negative attributes of the tourism industry and provide a positive approach for developing tourism, especially for developing nations. The term 'alternative tourism' is used to describe forms that positively enhance the experience of the tourists as well as the natural and social community in which they enter, avoiding many of the negative consequences of mass tourism (Cohen 1989; Cazes 1989:117; Eadington and Smith 1992; Wheeler 1992:141; Butler 1995, 1992).

In developing nations, interest in alternative tourism has increased since the mid 1980's. Alternative tourism has grown substantially, due to the needs and expectations of tourists. Dissatisfied with current forms of tourism, many tourists are seeking an 'authentic' experience that provides, adventure, flexibility, and real interaction with host communities, not contrived experiences available through mass tourism (Cohen 1989, 1984; MacCannell 1976; Smith and Eadington, eds. 1992). Erik Cohen suggests that alternative tourists want to safeguard travel, while not exploiting the natural and cultural settings entered, nor contribute to the "neo-colonial structural development of the Third World" (Cohen 1989:129-130). Following the attitude changes of tourists, travel agencies have developed tours that attempt to accommodate their demands.

While the ideology of alternative tourism has been widely accepted, tourism researchers are skeptical of its value or practicality (Wheeller 1992; Cohen 1991; Butler 1992). Richard W. Butler (1992, 1991) critically examines several ways in which alternative tourism attempts to alleviate the problems of mass tourism; reduction in the numbers of tourists, changing the type of

tourist, and educating hosts and guests. By reducing the number of tourists, alternative tourism intends to limit the strain on natural and cultural settings. However, where mass tourism exists, limiting the numbers is extremely difficult and can lead to a loss of revenues and jobs, thus lowering the standard of living (Butler 1991:204; 1992:41). Changing the type of tourist can be as difficult as reducing the numbers, if not impossible. Once a tourism destination is developed and acquires a steady flow of tourists, regaining the patronage of an Explorer type tourist is unlikely (Christaller 1963 cited in Butler 1992:42). The third example, educating the parties involved in tourism, may be the most viable and important option. However, it is naive to believe that education, alone, will obtain the results desired by alternative tourism (Butler 1991:207; 1992:42). Not only would the education process take a long period of time, but hosts and guests tend to have different agendas, such as economic benefits from tourism, that outweigh the researchers perceived negative impacts (Butler 1991:207; 1992:42).

While tourism researchers provide numerous reasons for why alternative tourism cannot replace mass tourism, many suggest that alternative forms can create more appropriate means of developing tourism (Cohen 1989; Butler 1992; Wheeler 1992). For example, where it is extremely difficult to curb tourist numbers in current large-scale mass tourism projects, it is more feasible to limit the number of tourists before they grow out of control (Butler 1991:205).

Different tourism projects require distinctive management strategies and contemporary tourism is an extremely varied and many sided phenomenon (Cohen 1989). Thus "claiming one form of tourism [or management strategy] is all things to all areas is not only pious and naive, it



unfair, unrealistic, and unwise" (Butler 1990 as cited in Wheeler 1992:144). Alternative forms of tourism can provide promising results if thoroughly researched, planned, managed, and geared to specific tourism developments.

One type of alternative tourism that has become popular in the 1990's is environmentally and culturally sensitive tourism. Many types of tourism including skiing, sight seeing, and backpacking rely on natural settings, such as mountains, beaches and jungles (McCool 1990; Briassoulis and van der Straaten 1992). Therefore, the relationship between tourism and the environment has become the topic for numerous articles and books (Briassoulis and van der Straaten 1992; Butler 1991, 1992; Budowski, G. 1976; Edington and Edington 1986; Whelan 1991). Tourism researchers, past and present, often discuss the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the environment. However, it is a more recent phenomenon that researchers have looked at the role of local communities within their environmental context and tourism industry. Due to the complex interaction of factors, separating the environmental impact of tourism from political economic and sociocultural variables is a difficult task. Helen Briassoulis and Jan van der Straaten (1992:4) emphasize that:

tourism development must be imbedded within a comprehensive planning framework for the whole region of interest in order to avoid the unwanted consequences of conflicts among incompatible land uses, the overdevelopment of one activity at the expense of the others and of the region itself, at least in the long run, and to provide for reasonable allocation of local environmental resources and services among competing uses directed to maximizing local welfare and achieving sustainable development of the area concerned.

Briassoulis and van der Straaten stress understanding the interrelationships between sociocultural, political economic, and environmental activities

within a local, as well as broader context, in order to develop a sustainable form of tourism. This observation brings to the fore the importance of the ecosystem perspective in shaping economic development and tourism.

Ecotourism, one of the alternative forms of tourism, attempts to alleviate the negative impacts of mass tourism by appealing to the environmentally and culturally aware tourists, who strive to provide benefits to the countries and communities they enter. The ecosystem perspective is especially relevant to ecotourism since the industry directly links political economy, cultural, and environmental variables, providing an excellent opportunity to understand their interconnectedness. By looking at the interactions between these variables, within the framework of an encompassing ecosystem, and focusing on the political economic and historical context, problems of development can be better addressed, leading toward a more sustainable form of development and ecotourism. The identification of these interrelationships is critical, especially in developing nations, where ecotourism has been considered an appropriate means to sustainable development.

## Endnotes for Chapter 2:

<sup>1</sup> See Stephen L.J. Smith (1989); D.C. Gilbert (1990); William F. Theobald (1994:3-19) for discussions concerning and defining tourism as a research concept.

<sup>2</sup> Using a broad definition of tourism addresses, also, the following comment in Dennison Nash's article, "Tourism as an Anthropological Subject"(1981), in which Nash describes the touristic system as being "embedded in some broader social context" and warns researchers of not losing sight of the overall, broader context.

<sup>3</sup> Some anthropological definitions of tourism include: Tourism is the activities of a person during leisure time travel (Nash 1981; Graburn 1981 commenting on Nash's article); "Tourism is a special form of play involving travel, or getting away from 'it all' (work and home), affording relaxation from tensions, and for some, the opportunity to temporarily become a nonentity, removed from the ringing telephone," an opportunity for renewal of one's energies for the workday world(Graburn 1989:22).

<sup>4</sup> For an economically grounded discussion of leisure see Nash 1995. In this article Nash illustrates that "leisure involves *freedom from* societal obligations ... necessary for the maintenance of a society and its reproduction," thus people who are not working enter a sphere of leisure (Nash 1995:31). Nash suggests that the relationship between leisure and work-related activities is grounded in economic terms, thus "leisure becomes, in Sahlins' view (1972:65), a 'superstructural counterpart of a dynamic proper to the economy'" (Nash 1995:32). Nash argues that "leisure is a social production that is dependent on the nature and extent of a society's work and the capacity of the work to generate the surplus necessary to maintain those not working" (Nash 1979:4 as cited in Nash 1995:32). In order to travel as a form of leisure, a person must produce a surplus of labor, providing them with an opportunity to vacation or escape responsibilities.

<sup>5</sup> Dennison Nash provides insight on the relationship between positive local sanctions and leisure time with his statement, "thought of in this way, leisure would seem to exist in all societies, but the amount, form, and nature of its allocation in a population appears to vary cross-culturally and intra-culturally" (Nash 1995:31).

<sup>6</sup> John Urry's book, (1990), "The Tourist Gaze," discusses the use of photographs to capture and reconstruct travels. pp.136-140.

<sup>7</sup> A commonly cited cognitive-normative model was set forth by Erik Cohen (Cohen 1979 cited in Murphy 1985, Lea 1988). Cohen divided tourist into five experience categories: Existential, Experimental, Experiential, Diversionary, and Recreational. Existential, Experimental, and Experiential tourists are escaping their everyday life in search of spiritual experiences and alternative lifestyles to replace, change, or enhance their own. The Diversionary and Recreational tourists are escaping their everyday routines in search of entertainment, relaxation, and restoration. The underline motivation for travel, using Cohen's categories, is that the experiences desired cannot be fulfilled at home. These categories helps the tourist identify the type of vacation necessary to fulfill their personal needs.

Another model used to differentiate tourists is the market segmentation process (Palacio and McCool 1993). This model divides the tourism market based on "social-demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, etc.), geography, behavior, and 'psychographics' or motivations" of ecotourists visiting Belize (Palacio and McCool 1993:2).

<sup>8</sup> Valene L. Smith's tourist typology model makes the general assumption that as tourists numbers increase, local perceptions of tourism decreases. (1989:15)

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<sup>9</sup> Carrying capacity studies attempt to estimate the maximum number of tourists that can be managed without causing negative impacts on local communities, however, traditional carrying capacity models have failed to identify carrying capacities in practical settings (McCool 1996:2; Williams and Gill 1994:186).

<sup>10</sup> For a recent discussion of tourism and the promotion of peace see Var, Ap, and Van Doren's *Tourism and World Peace*, in *Global Tourism: The Next Decade*, 1994.

## Chapter 3

### **A Critical View of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism in developing nations, one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, has been designed to eliminate problems associated with conventional tourism. The actual growth rate of ecotourism and its contribution to world economies is difficult to determine. This difficulty stems from the infancy of the industry and the lack of a standardized definition. These definitions range from narrow and specific, to broad categorizations; for examples of the various definitions see Table 3.1.. Even though there has been difficulty in defining the term, "there seems to be general agreement that ecotourism involves minimum density, low impact activities which can take place where there are natural sites and sufficient biological, cultural, and geographical interests to attract tourists" (Hawkins 1994:261-2).

Despite the lack of a precise definition, most studies show nature oriented tourism or ecotourism as a growing industry.<sup>1</sup> Determining the growth of ecotourism focuses on identifying ecotourism destinations, then calculating the economic increases related to tourism, however only a fraction of these estimates actually represent ecotourism (Cater 1994:73). (See Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 for examples). Countries considered ecotourism destinations mainly include tropical developing nations. A study conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in 1988, estimated that \$12 billion of the \$55 billion earned by tourism globally, was related to ecotourism (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1992 as cited in Cater 1994:73). As a growing

industry, ecotourism offers a potential economic windfall for developing nations, thus it is important to understand the development and management of the ecotourism market.

**Table 3.1**

**Definitions and Characterizations of Ecotourism**

- Ecotourism is a subset of Nature tourism in which conservationist and tourist interests work together to preserve environmental quality while mutually protecting tourism.
- Ecotourism is purposely focused on enhancing and maintaining natural systems through tourism. It is a contemporary strategy that is vital to the maintenance of healthy ecosystems.
- Currently the term ecotourism is apt to be used as a catchall applied indiscriminately to almost anything that links tourism and Nature.
- Ecotourism, narrowly defined, is a Nature oriented tour programme based on Nature and archaeological resources. In a broader sense it would include indigenous or local culture as a natural resource.
- Ecotourism, a new tourism strategy that balances development and economic gains, is seen as a new force that can benefit both Nature and developing destinations.

Source: Scarce 1993 as cited in Nelson 1994

***Other Definitions Include:***

- Ecotourism is nature travel that advances conservation and sustainable development efforts (Boo 1992:iii)
- Ecotourism, a fad which has as many definitions as perpetrators... In general, ecotourism suggests travel opportunities designed to help people get more in touch with the beauty, wonder, and value of the environment and then to do something to preserve, protect, or restore what has been destroyed or nearly destroyed by our recent (and, in some cases, distant) ancestors. In the best of all worlds, ecotourism can provide an avenue for indigenous peoples to remain on their ancestral lands while receiving revenue from activities that they have always followed or activities that utilize their ancient knowledge (Brause 1992:29)

**Table 3.2****Growth in tourism to selected destinations**

	<b>Tourists arrivals (thousands)</b>		<b>Tourism receipts (US\$ millions)</b>	
	<b>1981</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1990</b>
Belize	93	222	8	91
Costa Rica	333	435	94	275
Ecuador	245	332	131	193
Kenya	373	801	175	443

Source: World Tourism Organization (1986;1992) cited from Cater 1994.

**Table 3.3****Tourist arrivals and international receipts**

	<b>Tourists arrivals (thousands)</b>		<b>Tourism receipts (US\$ millions)</b>	
	<b>1989</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1993</b>
Costa Rica	376	684	207	577
Guatemala	437	562	152	265
Panama	192	298	161	228
Chile	797	1,412	407	824
Nepal	240	293	107	137
Vietnam	215	670	59	85

Source: Department for Economic and Social information and Policy Analysis Statistical division (1995)

## History of the Ecotourism Concept

The inception of ecotourism is linked to the environmental movement of the 1960's (Nelson 1994:238; Duenkel and Scott 1994:16). This movement brought to the fore the negative consequences of economic growth on the environment, especially air and water quality as well as forest and wildlife conditions (Nelson 1994:248). However, little was done to unite the tourism industry with environmental concerns until the 1970's.

Jaclyn A. Card and Marit Johnson Vogelsong propose that ecotourism originated during the 'responsible tourism movement' of the 1970's, as a "reaction to cultural spoliation, economic incongruities, and the destruction of natural resources" (Card and Vogelsong 1995:57). Tourism research, at this time, is exemplified by the oft quoted article "Tourism and Environmental Conservation: Conflict, Coexistence, or Symbiosis," (1976), by Gerardo Budowski. Budowski set forth several ways in which to combine tourism with conservation (presented in Table 3.4) (Budowski 1976; Fennell and Smale 1992:21-2). The underlying principles of Budowski's strategies aspire to provide "mutual benefits for conservation and tourism through cooperation" (Fennell and Smale 1992:22). These ideas are evident in the premise of ecotourism, and are considered one of the primary sources of ecotourism development.

The ecotourism concept strengthened during the 1980's with the movement toward economic and environmental policies that incorporated the ideas of sustainable development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), commonly referred to as the Brundtland Commission, defined sustainable development "as the goal to meet the environmental, cultural, and economic needs of the present



generations, without compromising the needs of future generations" (WCED 1987 interpreted by Card and Vogelsong 1995:57).

**Table 3.4**

**Tourism and Conservation Symbiosis**

1. The tourist industry should support conservation organization financially as an investment to further its own interests in natural areas as attractions.
2. There is a dire need to create parks, reserves, and other protected areas to meet the requirements of the tourism industry and to distribute the potential demand for such areas.
3. Greater cooperation is needed between tourist authorities and national park authorities regarding the planning on sites to better direct certain forms of use to those areas that are best able to withstand them and to provide meaningful tourism experiences.
4. Tourist authorities should actively contribute to the efforts made by conservation groups in the preparation of guidelines for tourist groups in natural areas - the adoption of a code of ethics.
5. Support should be provided to make tours and other tourist facilities connected with natural areas available to schools, university students, and similar groups, at reduced rates thereby raising awareness and contributing to the goal of the previous point.
6. The tourist industry should assist in the establishment and maintenance of interpretation and information centers connected with national parks and other natural areas, also as a means of awareness raising and education.
7. Tourist authorities might assist in preparing and editing publications that explain the natural resources and their attributes to the general public.
8. Tourism can play a role in supporting education and professional training activities that deal with the tourism-conservation relationship (e.g., courses offered to guides and other park personnel).

Source: Budowski 1976 adapted by Fennell and Smale 1992

Examples of how sustainable development has influenced companies participating in ecotourism, range from the inclusion of environmental protection into company mission statements to basic recycling efforts (D'Amore 1993:65). Idealistically, ecotourism is sustainable tourism, and provides the means to avoid environmental degradation and economic inequality through conservation and fair use practices while stimulating economic activity (Card and Vogelsong 1995:57). Thus sustainable tourism strives to combine conservation, tourism and development, benefiting the environment and economic resources of the host nation. Fundamentally, trends in tourism development comply with current natural resource management practices which are focusing on ways to promote sustainable economic viability at national and local levels (Boo 1992:iv).

Megan Epler Wood and The Ecotourism Society take the definition of ecotourism one step further, stating that ecotourism is the

purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make conservation of natural resources financially beneficial to local citizens. (Wood 1991:201; The Ecotourism Society 1992 as cited in Hawkins 1994:260)

The inclusion of the local community is a slight, yet, significant distinction. Wood's concise definition brings to the fore the role of the local population in creating successful forms of sustainable tourism and conservation. Ecotourism participants are expected to be aware of and to alleviate their negative impacts on the host communities. The definition, also, demonstrates the importance of understanding the interconnections between cultural, economic, and environmental variables. Therefore, ecotourism, as

well as sustainability, needs to be defined within these interrelationships, while emphasizing the role of the local populations for project success.

Tourists, one of the key variables affecting the cultural, economic and environmental interrelationships, are an integral part of the ecotourism process. Tourist interactions with the local community influence the success of ecotourism programs. The next section provides an overview of the ecotourist and their role within ecotourism.

### **The Emerging Ecotourist**

In the past decade, ideas of sustainable development and conservation have come to the fore of the tourism industry. Changing with the environmentally and culturally sensitive forms of sustainable tourism are the attitudes and demands of tourists. In this manner, tourists and tourism destinations, not unlike other products, are subject to the trends of the times (Prosser 1994:22-3). Robert Prosser has noted four forces of social change that are driving tourism toward a more sustainable form and ecotourism (Prosser 1994:31): (1) current dissatisfaction with existing tourism (see Boo 1992:iv; Budowski, T. 1992:53; Higinio and Munt 1993:8; Wight 1993, 1994:41,51); (2) globally, an increase in environmental awareness and cultural sensitivity (see Cater 1994:71; Ryel and Grasse 1991; Wight 1993, 1994); (3) tourism destinations realizing the importance and sensitivity of their human and environmental resources (see Cater 1994:72; Gurung and De Coursey 1994 (Nepal); Hall, C.M. 1994 (Australia); Hall, D. and Kinnaird 1994 (Romania); Rovinski 1991 (Costa Rica); Weaver 1994 (The Caribbean)); (4) tourism operators and developers creating programs following the practices of sustainable development (Hall, C.M. 1994; Sissman 1994; Wight 1993, 1994).

From the tourists' point of view, existing tourism options lack the adventure, education, cultural and environmental interactions, and hands-on experiences that they seek.

Part of the impetus for these changed desires stems from a global sensitivity to environmental destruction and cultural differences. Many tourists are becoming aware of the negative consequences of tourism on host destinations. However, understanding the negative impacts does not mean tourists avoid traveling, on the contrary, many want to 'get there before the destination is destroyed.' A new group of tourist, called ecotourists, attempt to alleviate the negative aspects of tourism by seeking alternative ways to travel, hoping to minimize their ecological and cultural effect.

Ecotourists appeal to developing nations as the means to increase foreign economic exchanges while abating the extractive nature of current strategies, providing short term and long term (sustainable) economic gains. Adapting to the desires of tourist and developing nations, tourism developers and operators have devised programs to alleviate the negative consequences of tourism. Ecotourism programs tap into the growing environmental and cultural sensitivity of the emerging ecotourists, as well as accommodate the needs of developing nations.

Since ecotourists differentiate themselves from other tourists by accepting a cultural and environmental sensitivity that aspires to alleviate the negative aspects of tourism, further information on the ecotourist is necessary. Identifying the ecotourist requires an understanding of their demographics as well as the type of travel in which they participate.<sup>2</sup> Ecotourists' demographics vary, however several studies suggest that there are some generalizations that can be made (Whelan 1991, Budowski, T. 1992).

These studies suggest that ecotourists originate from predominately Western societies, such as the United States, Germany, and Japan, and are wealthy individuals, possessing a high percentage of disposable income and free time. Generally, ecotourists are highly educated, travel in small numbers, spend larger sums of money than conventional tourists, and are repeat visitors (Whelan 1991; Budowski, T. 1992; Eagles 1995). Ideally, ecotourists represent the Explorer category of tourists, (as discussed in Chapter 2), and tend to arrive early to ecotourism destinations and are innovators of tourism practices.

However, this strict interpretation assumes that all ecotourists behave with appropriate environmental and cultural sensitivity, in actuality, this is not always the case (Cater 1994:76-77). More often, the term ecotourist is used to describe any nature-oriented tourist. Thus, to gain a better grasp on the ecotourist, it is necessary to recognize the types of travel nature-oriented tourists partake.

Ecotourists search for experiences that provide adventure as well as interaction with the environment and other cultures. Kreg Lindberg differentiates ecotourist using the types of experiences they expect (Lindberg 1991; Lindberg and Enriquez 1994; Hawkins 1994:264).<sup>3</sup> These categories are:

- Type 1: *Hard-Core Nature Tourists*: Scientific researchers or members of tours specifically designed for education, removal of litter, or similar purposes.
- Type 2: *Dedicated Nature Tourists*: People who take trips specifically to see protected areas and who want to understand local natural and cultural history.
- Type 3: *Mainstream Nature Tourists*: People who visit the Amazon, the Rwandan gorilla park, or other destinations primarily to take an unusual trip.
- Type 4: *Casual Nature Tourists*: People who partake in nature incidentally as part of a broader trip.

Matching the type of experiences expected by ecotourist with the context of an ecotourism destination, aids in developing a more sustainable ecotourism program. Therefore, providing a "simple description of market segments for planning purposes" creates a better synthesis between ecotourists, ecotourism programs, and the host community; for example, "Hard Core and Dedicated Nature tourists are more likely to be tolerant of limited amenities than Casual tourists" (Hawkins 1994:264). Lindberg (1991) asserts that these categories are fluid, in which an individual can fit into any or all the classifications at a given time. Even though a distinct separation of ecotourist types eludes researchers, ecotourism programs benefit from identifying the differences.

### **The Aim of Ecotourism**

Ideally, ecotourism, as an industry, has been created to alleviate the major environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural exploitation associated with conventional tourism (Card and Vogelsong 1995:59). Ecotourism in the purest form, therefore, strictly follows Megan Epler Wood's definition

stressing conservation through careful travel and local communities benefit. Pamela Wight (1993; 1994) has set forth a list of the key principles underlying the concept of ecotourism: outlined in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5**

**The Principles of Ecotourism**

- Ecotourism should not degrade the resource and should be developed in an environmentally sound manner;
- Ecotourism should provide first-hand, participatory, and enlightening experiences;
- Ecotourism should involve education among all parties -- local communities, government, nongovernmental organizations, industry, and tourists (before, during, and after trip);
- Ecotourism should encourage all-party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource;
- Ecotourism should involve acceptance of the resource on its own terms, and in recognition of its limits, which involves supply-oriented management;
- Ecotourism should promote understanding and involve partnerships between many players, which could include government, nongovernment organizations, industry scientists, and locals (both before and during operations);
- Ecotourism should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behaviors towards the natural and cultural environment, by all players;
- Ecotourism should provide long-term benefits -- to the resource, to the local community, and to industry (benefits may be conservation, scientific, social, cultural, or economic).

Source: from Wight 1993; 1994

These principles reflect the influence of Gerardo Budowski's tourism and conservation symbiosis (Table 3.4), the idea and practices of sustainable development, Kreg Lindberg's ecotourist typology, and Megan Epler Wood's

inclusion of local populations in ecotourism programs. Thus, the ecotourism industry can successfully separate itself from mass tourism by emphasizing these features. Ecotourism destinations, especially developing nations, should proceed with caution when modifying their cultural, economic, and environmental resources to accommodate ecotourists (Fennell and Smale 1992:24). While the principles of ecotourism are commendable, the realization of these goals is more difficult (Jones 1993:33).

### **Critiques of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism has been embraced by many developing countries as the reliable means of economic development, nationally and internationally. Tourism contributes greatly to the economic development of many developing nations, as displayed previously in Table 3.2. and Table 3.3.. The primary benefits related to the development of ecotourism in developing nations include increased foreign exchange, the creation of jobs and infrastructure, increased funding for protected areas and local communities, and better education programs (Wight 1993; Boo 1992; Boo 1990a). Although the benefits of ecotourism parallel the goals of large-scale tourism, ecotourism projects are designed to reduce the negative impacts of large-scale tourism. While it is important to understand the beneficial aspects of ecotourism, it is also paramount to understand the problems associated with it.

Elizabeth Boo (1992) separated the primary costs of ecotourism into three categories: environmental degradation, economic instability, and socio-cultural changes. Ironically, these are the same problems in which ecotourism was created to resolve. Overall, ecotourism brings people to less developed areas, with delicately balanced physical and cultural



environments, hence the consequences for ecotourism exhibiting the problems associated with conventional tourism are more severe. Escalating the negative impacts of ecotourism, is the tendency for developing nations to accept a general, broad-based definition of ecotourism when creating ecotourism programs.

Environmentally, the growth of ecotourism in developing nations has increased the protection of many natural ecosystems, however, the influx of tourists has brought several negative impacts. Boo (1992) discovered a range of environmental degradation traced to ecotourism including; excess waste, soil erosion, pollution, and changes in animal behavior. One example of environmental problems caused by ecotourism is Nepal. The tourism industry in Nepal has risen steadily since the 1970's, and these increases have concentrated in two regions, the Annapurna Conservation Area and Sagarmatha or Mount Everest. The primary forms of environmental degradation consist of litter and deforestation. While litter covers the trails, the rapid decline of forest is critical. Deforestation, exhibited by the tree line rising several hundred feet, is directly related to building and heating huts as well as cooking meals to satisfy the demands of increased tourism. This deforestation not only limits the wood supplies for the villagers, but there is danger of severe erosion inhibiting the reforestation process. Even though methods are being taken to eliminate these problems, ecotourism has failed to provide the sustainable form of tourism expected. (Gurung and de Coursey 1994; Norris 1992; Serra-Vega 1992; Stevens 1993; Tallantire 1993; Warner 1991; Whelan 1991).

Economically, the benefits from increased tourism receipts in developing nations are often exaggerated. Researchers from the World Bank

estimate that 55 percent of tourism and ecotourism receipts return to the Western nations (Boo 1990; Warner 1991; Norris 1992; Jones 1993). Part of this problem stems from the lack of infrastructure. Even though ecotourism projects do not require the large developments or expenditures of mass tourism, areas designated for ecotourism need to be accessible. Making ecotourism destinations available to travelers often requires costly upgrades to access routes (Sherman and Dixon 1991:98-99). Frequently, developing nations need to rely on foreign funding to build their ecotourism industry, therefore the balance of trade tips in the lender's favor. Ordinarily, foreign investors control the tourism industry in developing nations through the ownership of land, imported foods, and organized trips created by firms based in the developed nations (Lindberg 1991; Lindberg and Enriquez 1994; Cater 1992; Jones 1993). Foreign dominance in these economic areas increases the loss of tourists' receipts back to the developed nations.

In developing nations, ecotourism is commended for creating jobs however, these jobs are often seasonal and low paying (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994). This economic situation can create inflation in ecotourism oriented regions, thus pricing the locals out of the market for land and other products (Cater 1994; 73-4). Inflationary prices, therefore, benefit wealthy local, regional, and foreign investors, further suppressing the needs of the local population. In order to provide economic benefits to the local population, as promised through ecotourism, it is necessary to determine the viability of the economic gains.

On a socio-cultural level, ecotourism provides travelers with the opportunity to learn more about different cultures, however these interactions do not always benefit both groups. Boo (1992) points out that

local populations are not always consulted before tourism enters their community, thus locals are placed in an awkward position and must cope with the tourists' presence. Even when initially invited tourists can become a burden on the community -- especially if the locals are not receiving the benefits desired (Belsky 1996). Interactions between hosts and guests are critical to the successful development of ecotourism projects.

While ecotourism has negative impacts they are often less than conventional tourism. By striving to combine the protection of the local, natural, and cultural ecosystem while generating economic gains, ecotourism creates an inherent contradiction. Conceptually, ecotourism exploits what it is trying to protect. This does not suggest that ecotourism cannot provide a sustainable form of tourism for developing nations, however, any decisions to promote ecotourism should be investigated thoroughly. In order to devise a sustainable source of economic production, ecotourism programs need to be conscious of the interactional variables and the context of development. Variables such as the environment, political economics, and culture interact continuously, thus understanding the nature of their interactions aids in the development of sustainable ecotourism. By using an ecosystem approach, anthropologists focus on the "individual actions and aggregate processes" of these interactional variables, hence determining the consequences of these interactions (Moran 1990:24-5). An ecosystem perspective views these interactional variables as parts of an encompassing ecosystem, allowing researchers to focus on specific interactions without losing sight of the overall effect. Thus using an ecosystem approach in studying ecotourism ameliorates the possibility of developing a more sustainable industry. The following chapter provides a case study in which an ecosystem approach is used to

identify several critical factors in the development process of Belize, hence leading toward an improved form of ecotourism.

### Endnotes for Chapter 3:

<sup>1</sup> Some tourism researchers, as shown through the definitions provided, would differentiate between nature-tourism and ecotourism. In this context, however, both terms are used to represent environmentally and culturally sensitive forms of tourism.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth E. Silverberg, Sheila J. Backman, and Kenneth F. Backman (1995) use psychographics to help identify ecotourists. They discovered six benefits that ecotourists seek and placed them on a continuum. These six variables were: education/history, socializing, camping, relaxation, nature, and economy.

Palacio and McCool (1993) use a combination of psychographics, demographics, geography, and behavior to segment the ecotourism market into four clustered groups of tourists to Belize: Nature Escapists, Ecotourists, Comfortable Naturalists, and Passive Players.

<sup>3</sup> Paul F.J. Eagles (1995) separates ecotourists along similar lines, describing four subsets of sustainable tourism in Western economies: ecotourism, wilderness travel, adventure tourism, and car camping. He compares and contrasts these types using a variety of variables including: environmental attitudes, demographics, social motives, business cycle, and environmental impact. This demonstrates the importance of understanding the context in developing a sustainable form of tourism.

## Chapter 4

### **Belize, C.A.: Historical Context and Development**

In the past decade, developing nations have been turning toward ecotourism programs as an opportunity to diversify and enhance their current forms of foreign economic exchange. Globally, the tourism industry has slightly reduced, however, tourism remains one of the fastest growing industrial sectors (Prosser 1994:19). Even though more than half the tourism industry occurs between developed nations, developing nations display the highest percentage increases (Table 4.1, Figure 4.1 a-d) (Prosser 1994). Developing nations have "an undeniable comparative advantage in terms of the variety and extent of unspoiled natural environments," attracting the ecotourist with unique adventures (Cater 1994:69). With the promises of combining governmental and local economic gains with environmental protection, ecotourism is often seen as the economic savior for restructuring developing economies.

**Table 4.1**

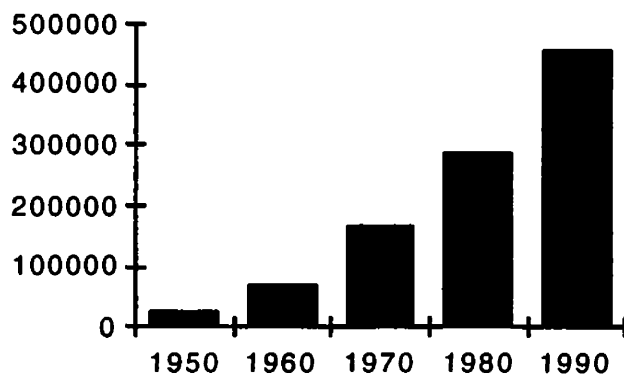
**Average Annual Increase Per Region - 1980-1992**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Percentage Growth</b>	
	<b><u>Tourists Arrivals</u></b>	
<b>WORLD</b>	<b>4.38</b>	
Africa	7.5	
Americas	4.25	
Caribbean		4.66
Central Amer.		3.95
North Amer.		4.10
South Amer.		4.99
East Asia/the Pacific	9.36	
Europe	3.6	
South Asia	3.66	

Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

**Figure 4.1a**

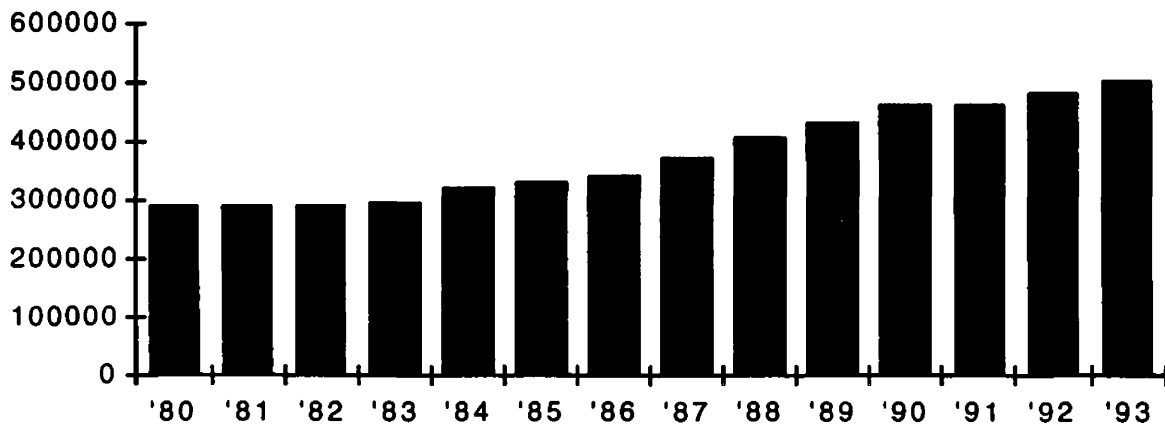
**Arrivals of Tourists from Abroad, Globally**  
(in thousands)



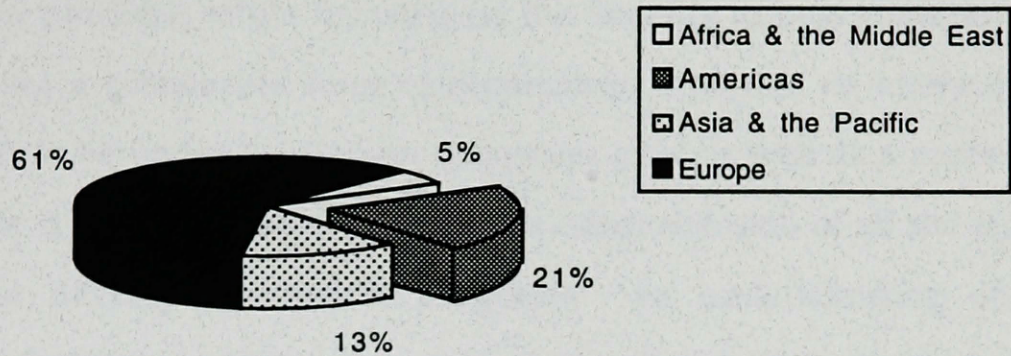
Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

**Figure 4.1b**

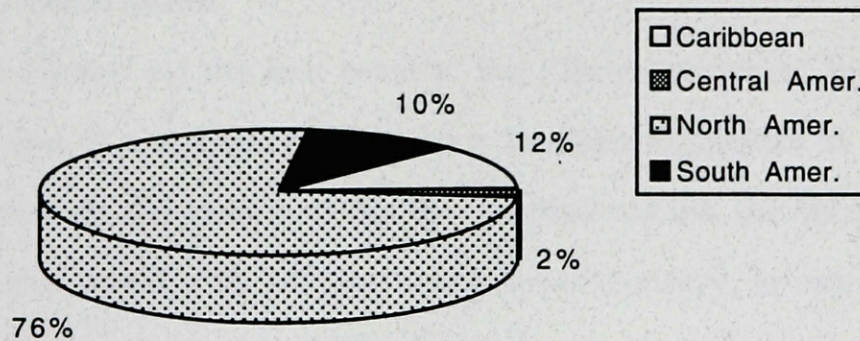
**Arrivals of Tourists from Abroad, Globally - Yearly Since 1980**  
(in thousands)



Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

**Figure 4.1c****Percent Share of Global Market (%)**

Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

**Figure 4.1d****Breakdown of the Americas 21 Percent Share (%)**

Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

As tourism quickly becomes the world's largest industry, it appears that ecotourism offers developing countries the opportunity to increase foreign economic exchange as well as protect their natural resources (Cater 1992:18).



The ecotourism concept and boom have captured the attention of conservationists, rural development specialists, tourists, tourism developers, residents living near protected areas, and private industry, as well (Boo 1992:iii). Additionally, ecotourism attempts to integrate economic and conservation practices, while focusing on the benefits to host communities. In developing a sustainable form of ecotourism, a myriad of interactional factors need to be understood on an ecosystem level as well as a contextual level. While it is naive to expect a complete comprehension of all the factors involved in developing tourism programs; an understanding of the interactions between political economy, socio-cultural, and environmental factors will benefit the development process. The recently independent Central American country of Belize provides an excellent case study to discuss further the issues involved in the process of developing and maintaining ecotourism projects.

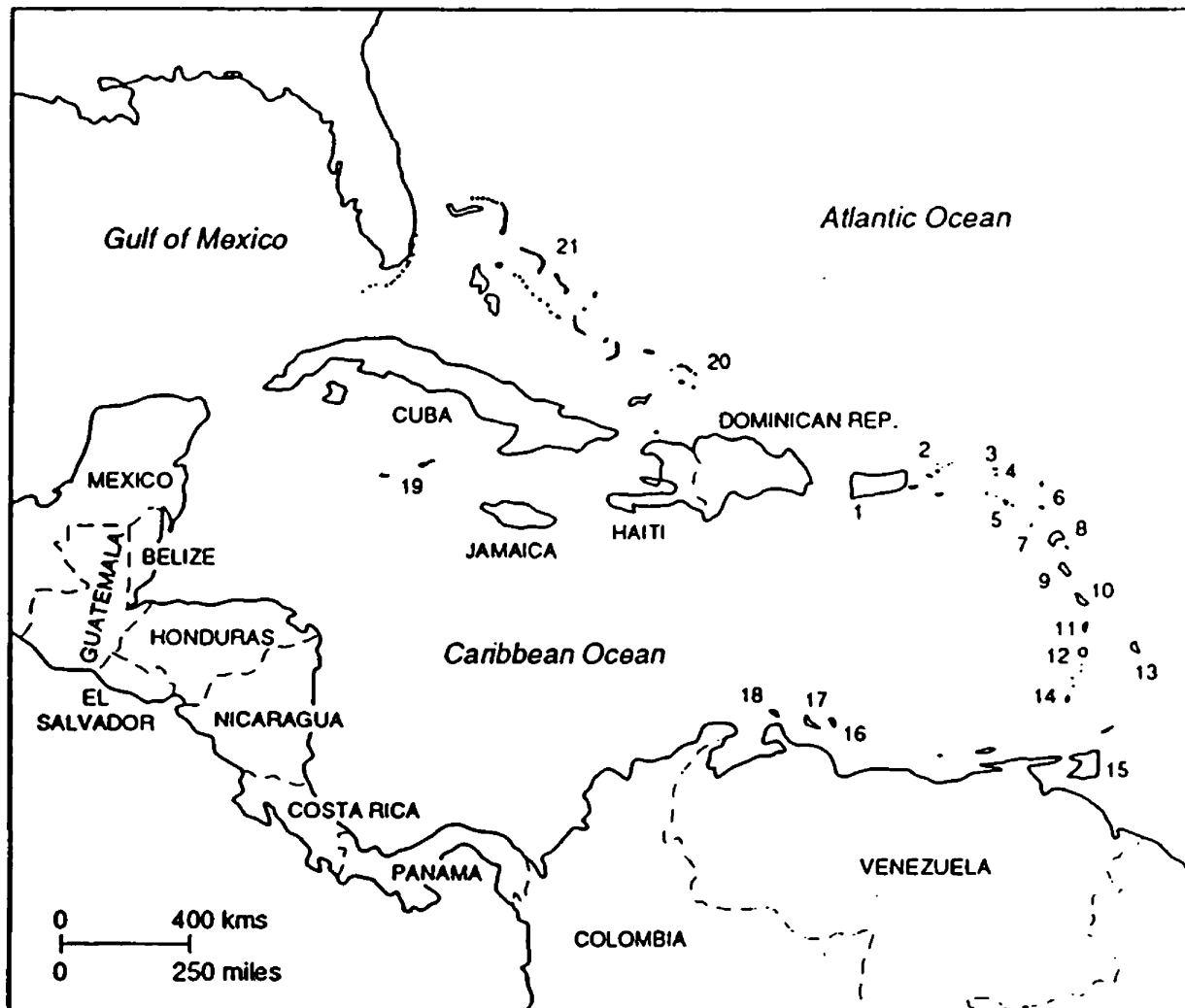
### **Environmental Description**

Belize is located on the east coast of the Central America, bordered by the Caribbean Sea in the East, the Mexican Yucatán Peninsula in the North and by Guatemala to the West and South. Nestled behind the second largest barrier reef in the world, this Massachusetts sized country, is approximately 8,750 square miles on the mainland, and 116 square miles divided among 200 islands or 'cayes' (Mahler & Wotkyns 1991) (Map 4.1).

This relatively small country, however, contains vast ecological diversity; including tropical forests, marshlands, savannas, mangroves, marine, riverine, and mountain environments (Map 4.2). The diversity of

Map 4.1

## Regional Context, Belize

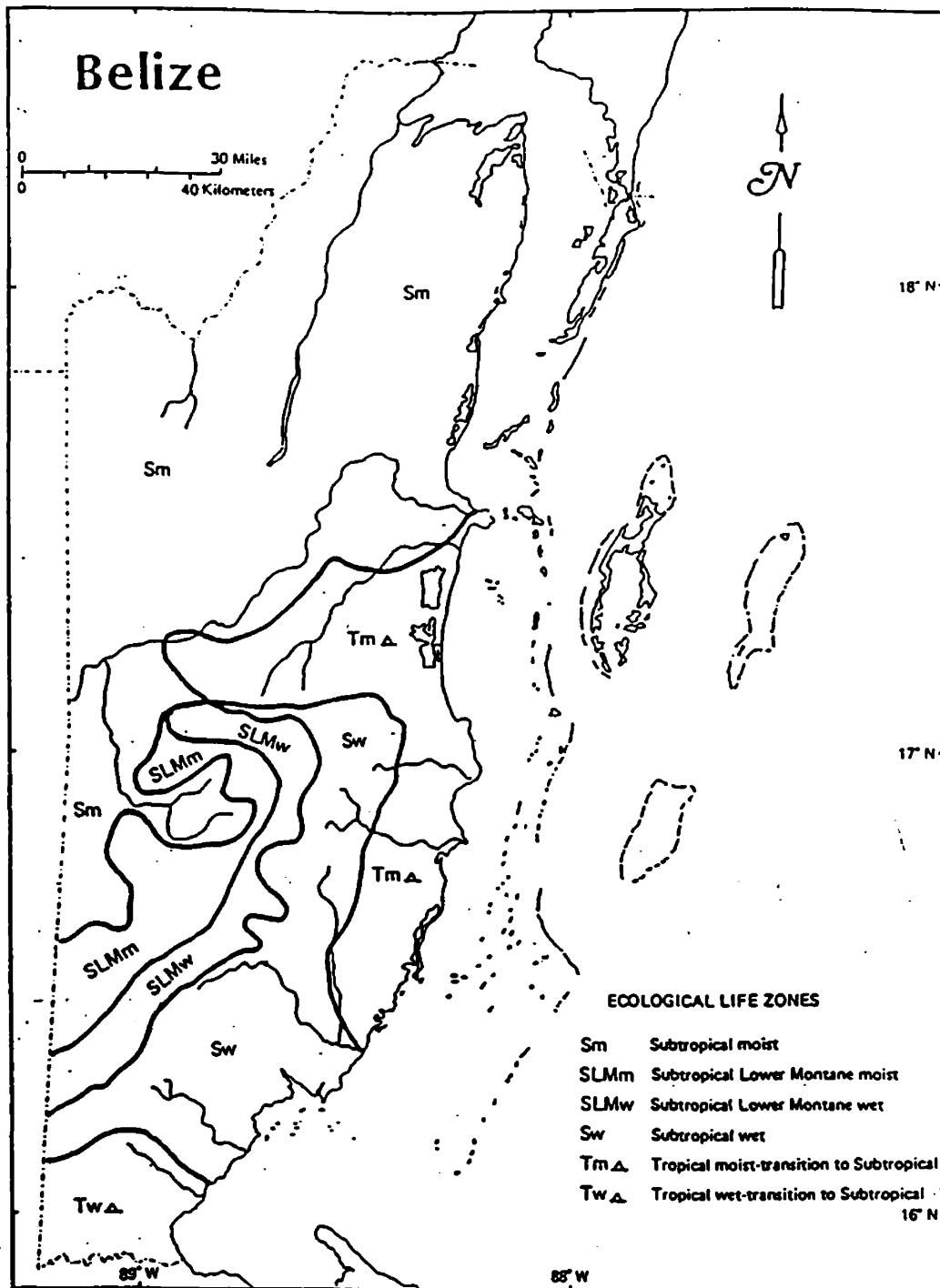


- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Puerto Rica (USA)       | 12. St. VINCENT                 |
| 2. Virgin Islands (US/UK)  | 13. BARBADOS                    |
| 3. Anguilla (UK)           | 14. GRENADA                     |
| 4. St. Maarten (Neth. Fr.) | 15. TRINIDAD & TOBAGO           |
| 5. St. KITTS-NEVIS         | 16. Bonaire (Neth.)             |
| 6. ANTIGUA & BARBUDA       | 17. Curacao (Neth.)             |
| 7. Montserrat (UK)         | 18. Aruba (Neth.)               |
| 8. Guadeloupe (Fr.)        | 19. Cayman Islands (UK)         |
| 9. DOMINICA                | 20. Turks & Caicos Islands (UK) |
| 10. Martinique (Fr.)       | 21. BAHAMAS                     |
| 11. St. LUCIA              |                                 |

Source: Weaver (1994)

Map 4.2

## Ecological Context, Belize



Source: Hartshon et. al. (1984)

habitats unfurl an equally diverse flora and fauna population including; 550 species of birds (see Irwin 1993), howler monkeys known as 'baboons' by the local Creole community (see Horwich 1990; Lipske 1992), jaguars (including the only preserve in the world), manatees, coral reefs, fish and many threatened and endangered species (Horwich and Lyons 1993). Other potential attractions and activities for tourists include: extensive Mayan archaeological sites, diverse cultural groups, scuba diving, sport fishing, bicycling, sea kayaking, and abundant protected areas (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991). Belize has protected 30 percent of this ecological diversity in the form of national reserves and is attempting to develop further their ecotourism programs (Cater 1992:20).<sup>1</sup>

As in many other subtropical countries, Belize has pronounced dry and wet seasons. December through March, Belize is relatively free of rain and has average temperatures ranging from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit. In contrast, summertime months, comprised of June through September, are rainy and shaded areas seldom fall below 90 degrees Fahrenheit (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:33). Tourism parallels these distinct weather patterns, in which most tourists travel to Belize during the dry season (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:41).

While this ecological diversity provides excellent conditions for ecotourism and thereby increased foreign economic exchange, Mark Moberg suggests that Belize's difficult geography has created "distinctive patterns of colonization that developed to exploit it" (Moberg 1992:16). Moberg's observation brings to the fore the interrelationship between history, political economy, and ecological diversity or ecosystems in the development of Belize as a independent nation. Thus, before we can understand how ecotourism

articulates into Belize's present political economic composition, we must first realize the historical context in which the contemporary political economy operates. Understanding the colonial impact on the political and economic developments of Belize provides the necessary means to fully recognize how ecotourism articulates into current forms of domestic and foreign economic exchange.

### Colonial Context <sup>2</sup>

In the statement, "as a nation, Belize is a product of the European colonization of the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," O. Nigel Bolland asserts that the development of Belize took place under the subjugation of European powers (Bolland 1986:7). While colonial hegemony cannot explain fully the development of Belize, its affect directed the political and economic structures operating today.

Historically, Europeans encountered the Americas in the late fifteenth century, however Central America was populated for thousands of years, prior to European contact. During the Classic Maya period, complex political organization and agriculture production sustained an estimated 400,000 people including specialized crafts-people, merchants, warriors, and priest/astronomers in the Belize region alone (Bolland 1986:9). However, by the time of European colonial interest of the region, the indigenous population had dwindled and major Mayan centers abandoned.

Even with drastic indigenous population declines, initial European attempts to colonize the region met with disaster. In 1493 the Spanish were granted the lands of Central America by Papal Donation, however the Spanish were not the only European nation interested in the region. English

Friars, attempting to convert the remaining Maya, built a church in the 1570's but were unsuccessful and the church was destroyed in the mid-1600's (Bolland 1986:11). Spanish missions met with similar fate. In 1638, most Maya under Spanish authority rebelled, burning the mission, killing settlers, and forcing the Spanish to abandon the Belize region for nearly half a century (Jones 1987:13 as cited by Moberg 1992:23). Except for these early failed missionary attempts, the interior lands of Belize were not exploited by Europeans, until the rise of the mahogany market in the late eighteenth century.

Even though pushed out of the interior by Mayan rebellions, Spain maintained sovereignty over the Belize region. Spain's main economic interest in Central America was the excavation of logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum*), an indigenous tree species found only on the Yucatán Peninsula and the Caribbean coast. Once processed in Europe, logwood produced a highly demanded European clothing dye (Moberg 1992:24). British pirates, in the region to raid the Spanish ships transporting logwood from the Yucatán, used the difficult Belizean coastline as a refuge from the Spanish navy. These pirates were the first Europeans to settle the Belize coast but not until the mid 1600's. The impetus of the settlement and its growth over the next 150 years was entirely attributed to the demand of logwood (Moberg 1992:24).

By the middle of the seventeenth century, British pirates, often obstructed by the Spanish navy, began to extract the large supply of logwood found on the Belizean coastline, themselves. In the late seventeenth century, Britain suppressed piracy, and this action "tactically encouraged the growth of settlements by former buccaneers to avert extortionate Spanish trade

practices" (Moberg 1992:24). The Spanish, wanting to preserve their political influence and logwood monopoly, continually attempted to expel the new settlers, known as Baymen. Even though, the Baymen were attacked and removed several times, they managed to reestablish the settlements and continued to increase logwood trade (Bolland 1986:13). In 1763, the British recognized Spanish sovereignty and were allowed to continue extracting logwood (Moberg 1992:24). However, by 1765, the coastal settlers formed a rudimentary governing body called the Public Meeting, which was organized, attended, and controlled by the wealthy landowners (Shoman 1990:44).

The 1783 Treaty of Versailles, ending the Seven Years' War, officially established Spanish sovereignty over the Belize Coast, but did not expel completely British influence. The Treaty allowed the British to continue logging operations under the stipulations that "they could not build forts, establish any form of government, or develop agriculture" (Bolland 1986:13). Since the extraction of logwood did not require large sedentary populations, the treaty's terms did not substantially change British logging operations within the region. Consequently, the Baymen, prohibited from agricultural production, needed to import food and other essentials from England (Bolland 1988 in Wilk 1990). This import oriented economy continues throughout the development of Belize, undermining the political economic process, and creating hyper-importation, defined as, the over-consumption of foreign produce, while not consuming local produce (Wilk 1990:137).

As war recurred between England and Spain in 1798, Spain again attempted to oust the Baymen. The Spanish defeat at the Battle of St. George's Caye, however, marked the end of their claims to the region and the

"beginning of official English recognition of the settlement, at least to the extent of defending it against rival powers" (Moberg 1992:24).

Even before Spanish defeat, the Baymen were reorganizing themselves by passing a series of laws in 1787, 'location laws,' which allocated and consolidated land to the wealthy settlers, who claimed it as freehold private property. The location laws reinforced the political and economic control by the elite Baymen and placed four-fifths of the land under the control of only 12 Baymen families. Part of the impetus for the private ownership of land was the decline of the logwood trade and the growing concentration on extracting mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). (Bolland 1986:19; Shoman 1990:44).

Mahogany, unlike logwood, grew mainly in the interior of Belize, thus required different extraction practices including more capital investment, more land, and larger scale productions (Bolland 1986:4;16). With the switch to mahogany extraction, a cheap source of labor became a major concern. The Baymen, unable to secure the Mayan as laborers, brought in thousands of slaves from Africa to fill the void (Bolland 1988 cited in Moberg 1992:25). Even though in the minority, the Baymen elite maintained control by using their political power to continue their economic and land monopoly, thus causing others to rely on them for wage labor and imported products. (Bolland 1986:20). For example, the Baymen elites' political power allowed them to hoard unused land, strategically denying land ownership to others, thus concentrating the settlement's effort on the mahogany trade. (Bolland 1986:20; Wilk 1990:138).

Due to the harvesting process of mahogany logging, which required many small and mobile work groups, the development of slavery in Belize



differed greatly from sugar and cotton plantations in other British colonies. For instance, the Baymen were able to keep a large number of slaves from interacting since they did not use the slaves to cultivate the land, thus relying on imports as the main food supply and denying the slaves any self-sufficiency. The Baymen in this economic context controlled the import market as well as the land resources, not allowing the free-workers and slaves to maintain permanent sources of staple food crops, causing further dependency. Even during the off season, when the slave owners encouraged their slaves to cultivate subsistence crops, lowering the owner's maintenance costs, imported foods made up a majority of the settlement's diet (Bolland and Shoman 1977, Bolland 1988 as cited by Moberg 1992:25). By controlling the importation of goods and denying others land ownership, the Baymen's oligarchy was able to virtually prohibit small holder farming (Moberg 1992:28).

Prior to the official emancipation of slaves in 1838, the establishment of Crown Lands further solidified the Baymen elite's influence in the settlement. Crown Lands placed all lands not privately owned under Crown control, leaving the Baymen's land claims intact, while rejecting the claims of free-people, such as the Garifuna, who had been cultivating land since the beginning of the nineteenth century (History of Belize 1983:38 as cited by Moberg 1992:27-28). During the period immediately preceding slave emancipation, 1824-1838, slave owners arranged a transition period that allowed slaves to work for pay, only after completing 40 hours of unpaid labor each week for their masters (Shoman 1990:45). This transitional period not only eased the strain on the masters, but was organized to condition slaves to wage labor and the logwood's industry demand, guaranteeing a cheap labor

source. (Shoman 1990:45). Overall, the Baymen elites' control over the political, economic, social, and legal infrastructure stifled any opportunity for the slaves and free-people of the settlement to become self-sufficient. Even the underdeveloped staple agriculture markets were abolished, to discourage food production that would compete with merchant operated imports (Bolland and Shoman 1977 as cited in Moberg 1992:28; Wilk 1990:138).

As the former slaves became eligible to own land, a new fee system was established effectively denying them the opportunity to purchase land. The denial of free land grants prevented independent farming, forcing the former slaves into wage labor controlled by the mahogany oligarchy, thus continuing the slaves' dependence on the Baymen. Another strategy devised by the elites provided 'advances' to freed slaves and other workers, legally requiring them to work for the company until the debt was paid. This system, called the "advanced-truck" system, pre-paid recruited laborers who needed to obtain equipment and foods necessary for the job from company stores, paying off the balance through labor (Moberg 1992:26). This system of labor contracting "insured a continued flow of labor into forestry camps and strengthened the dependence of former slaves upon their employers," tying the slaves to their previous owners for long periods, if not indefinitely (Moberg 1992:26).

Even though the Baymen controlled the flow of political and economic resources in the settlement, the costs of maintaining a successful mahogany trade fluctuated with the rise and fall of demand. During the middle of the nineteenth century, the mahogany industry boomed, resulting in cutters felling smaller trees as well as over-extracting trees easily assessable, depleting the resources (Bolland 1986:20). Consequently, a commensurate economic bust followed, leading local firms to collapse. The assets from the ailing local

firms were absorbed by their debtors, principally London merchants (Bolland 1986:20; Shoman 1990:46).

Additionally, Assad Shoman identifies three events during the middle of the nineteenth century that have "profound and permanent effects on the future development of the settlement" (Shoman 1990:46). First, the growing commercial sector, predominately British commercial houses, expanded trade with the settlement after the independence of Central America. Gradually these merchant houses gained political and economic leverage over the Baymen elite. Second, the Caste War in the Yucatán, 1848, forced many mestizos and Maya into the northern part of the Belize territory. This population influx nearly doubled the population and introduced agriculture in the region, especially sugar. The local elite managed to keep the African population from agricultural activities and continued to employ them as mahogany cutters. Since the Maya and mestizos entered the settlement when the mahogany trade dropped resulting in a saturated labor supply, the northern landowners welcomed the additional source of income from rent. Third, in 1854, Britain drafted the first constitution establishing an elected legislative assembly based on property ownership. Soon after the constitution, the Honduras Land Titles Acts passed, permitting the transfer of legal land titles to metropolitan companies and merchants. Strategically, the land ownership laws were drafted by British employees of the British Honduras Company, furthering the influence of the merchant class and British interests. (Shoman 1990:46-47).

In 1862, threatened by Maya attacks on British colonists and internal political unrest, England declared the region an official colony, British Honduras (Fernandez 1989:15-16). With the decline of the mahogany

industry, the rise of the merchant class, and subsequent decline of the settler forestry oligarchy, economic restructuring consolidated land ownership and political economic power further into metropolitan companies such as the British Honduras Company. By 1875, the British Honduras Company, renamed the Belize Estate and Produce Company Limited, owned a majority of the settlement's land. Several years later, Belize Estate acquired additional land, after a rival land owner went bankrupt, increasing Belize Estate's land ownership to half the private land, consequently becoming the single most important actor in the colony's political economic structure until the late 1940's (Moberg 1992:28).

Even though the settler elites were able to regain some political power in the 1890's, a prime example of the power the large landholders held is illustrated by the British Colonial Office ignoring proposals to diversify the economy of the region with agriculture, even when the timber business was in a decline (Moberg 1992:28; Shoman 1990:47). Furthermore, the land consolidation in the Belize region reflected the global restructuring of capitalism "which led to the growth of large companies that were the progenitors of today's transnationals" (Shoman 1990:47). O. Nigel Bolland aptly summarized the state of Belizean political economy, stating that "the monopolization of land, the dominance of foreign interests and the suppression of agriculture, the prolonged depression in the mahogany trade, and the economic power of a nouveau riche class all contributed to the underdevelopment and stagnation that characterized the Belizean economy in the late nineteenth century" (Bolland 1986:29).

### Political Economy and Development <sup>3</sup>

In the early 1900's, forest products continued to be the major source of the colonies economic production, while cash crops such as bananas and sugar remained small-scale economic enterprises, the export of chicle to the United States grew steadily. Overall, the agricultural industry's failure to prosper can be attributed to the lack of infrastructure provided agriculture, and the timber industries "juggernaut over labor and land" (Ashcraft 1973 c.f. Moberg 1992:30). In the 1920's there was a resurgence in the timber industry, which further suppressed other forms of economic diversification. However, the wage labor populations continued to be exploited, not reaping the benefits of these short-term economic profits, causing political economic unrest, and many were out of work into the 1940's (Moberg 1992:29).

Events of the 1930's further tied Belize to the colonial regime of the British. During the Great Depression, the value of the imports and exports in Belize dropped nearly one quarter, from \$9.9 million in 1929 to a mere \$2.7 million in 1933, and this economic hardship caused more workers to lose their jobs (Bolland 1986:32). The mahogany industry, the mainstay of Belize's economy, declined, allowing the merchant class to gain economic power and continue the dependency on imported foodstuffs by suppressing the agricultural industry. The Belize Estate and Produce Company, suffering from United States competition and possible take over, received financial assistance from England to maintain business. During this economic failure, however, a small non-white elite formed challenging the political power of the white settler elite (Shoman 1990:49).

Along with these economic hardships, the coast of Belize was devastated by a hurricane in 1931, killing thousands and leaving many

Belizeans homeless. Amid political protest, England provided economic support under the stipulation that they retained reserve power, directly tying Belize to their political and economic systems (Shoman 1990:49-50). The colonial government took this opportunity to build the infrastructure of the interior to provide jobs and assist in the development of an agriculture industry. This marks one of the first times the British colonial government involved itself with the development of Belizean infrastructure, until this time was underdeveloped. Nevertheless, import merchants and the timber industry were able to limit agriculture to the production of local staples (Fernandez 1989:34).

Political and economic inequality continued. At the end of World War II, the distribution of land resembled the situation comparable to that of the nineteenth centuries, with most land owned by foreigners. By the late 1940's, Belize, unable to surmount their balance of trade deficit, depended heavily on England for economic support (Moberg 1992:29). The colonial government, however, facing anti-colonial pressures promoted economic diversification (Moberg 1992:29).

The forest industry continued to decline in the 1950's, strengthening the economic position of the merchant class (Fernandez 1989:33). Even previously dominant landholders were unable to operate profitably. For instance, Belize Estate became a subsidiary of a foreign-owned transnational company primarily due to the economic stress of the depression combined with a drought in 1949, the over-exploitation of timber resources, and a changing world economy (Bolland 1986:77; Moberg 1992:29; Shoman 1990:50).

After World War II, the colonial state, attempting to attract foreign investors, increased its effort to develop the transportation, communication, and social service infrastructure (Shoman 1990:53). The diversification of the economy continued, especially relating to local agriculture and the sugar industry. Despite colonial influence, the political and economic changes of the previous decades combined with the rise of an educated class and a newly united workers' movement intensified the push toward independence (Shoman 1990:50-51).

England, by 1964, granted Belize the right to internal self-government, but retained the authority over foreign affairs. Assad Shoman (1990) asserts that the delayed act of granting self governing relates to Guatemala's continued claim to the territory, and more importantly, to the difficulty of ensuring that the transfer of power would not negatively effect the economic and social order established during colonial time. Land reform continued after the establishment of internal self-government, protecting Belizean interests and encouraging the use of undeveloped lands. These reforms, although, met with successful resistance by the large land owners. In actuality, foreign land ownership remained high, with 93.4 percent of estates over 100 acres and over 90 percent of all free hold land controlled by foreign interest, in 1971 (Bolland 1986:77). As a result, foreign land owners continued to dominate the political economy of Belize. The sugar industry, replacing the once powerful timber industry, accounted for 60 percent of all exports in the late 1960's (Shoman 1990:53). Since foreign capital controlled the processing plants, small farmers were tied directly to the decisions of the foreign investors, who had little economic interest in the Belizean economy.

This suppressive situation is not unique to the sugar industry; citrus and other cash crops fell under the similar economic constraints.

During the 1970's, the sugar industry dominated the economy of Belize, accounting for 75 percent of all exports in 1975 (Fernandez 1989:35). Although Britain retained control over foreign relations, preventing the unsupervised solicitation of aid from other countries and non-governmental institutions, the state continued to diversify their economic base and infrastructural development. The 1973 Alien Landholding Ordinance attempted to regulate the purchase and use of land by foreigners. This law controlled the new purchases of land by foreign interests, however, it did little to restructure the existing land inequalities. As of 1986, most of the best agricultural land remained foreign owned and undeveloped. (Bolland 1986:80).

As Belize moved toward formal independence in 1981, increased oil prices and the inability for domestic crop production to fulfill the needs of the population, the trade deficit reached astonishing levels (Government of Belize 1985 in Moberg 1992:31). One of the primary factors contributing to the deficit was the global decline of the sugar market. Since 1959, Belize's economic foundation was based on the success of the sugar industry. When the global market declined, Belize's economy suffered a severe loss. The negative result of the sugar crisis verifies that, even after continuous economic restructuring and diversification, the Belize economy largely depended on the success of a few commodities, often tied to unpredictable global prices and demands (Moberg 1992:31).

In summary, the historical context and development of Belize is dominated by colonial influences. From the initial settlement, British



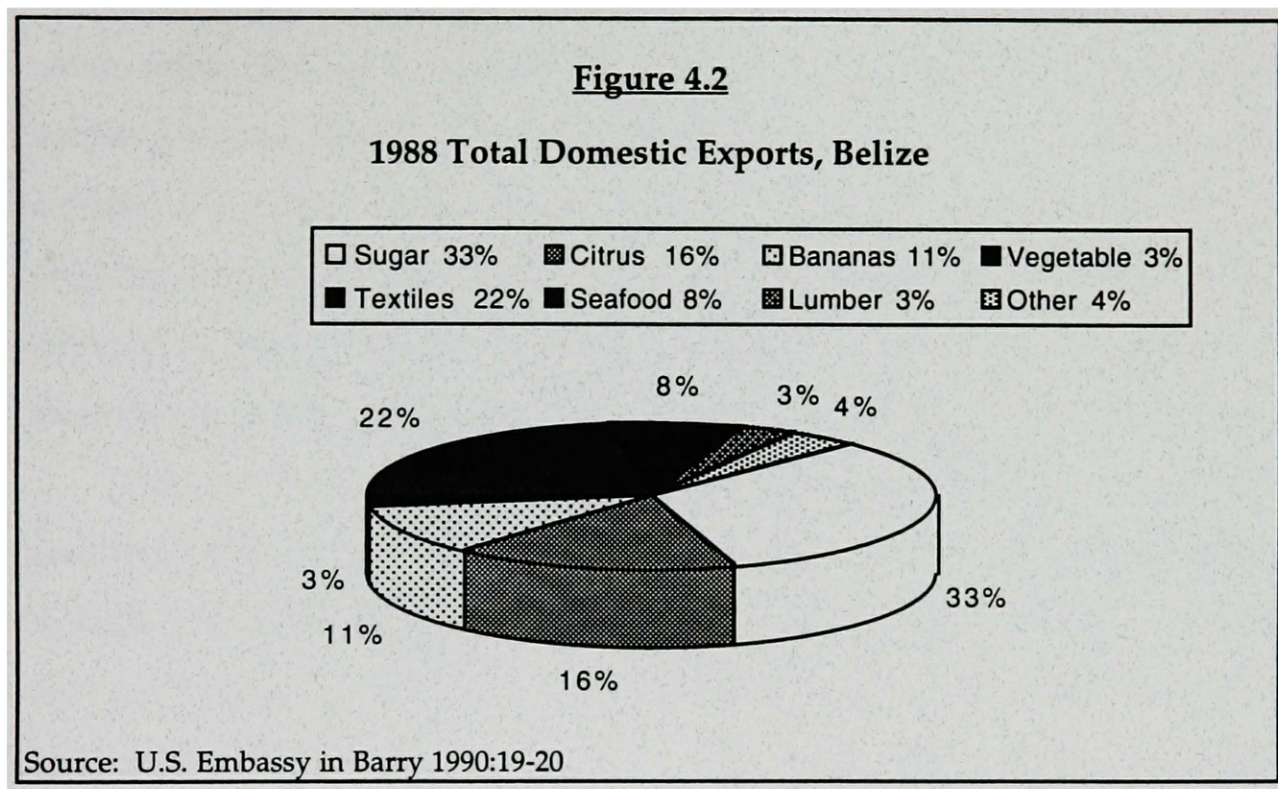
hegemony shaped the political economic structures leading to structural inequalities into the twentieth century. The extractive nature of Belize's logging and sugar industries and the lack of agricultural developments exemplifies British interest in the region, not as a colonial settlement, but as a source of mercantile capital. Furthermore, the emphasis on these extractive industries influenced the settlement's dependence on imported foods and consumer goods, the slow infrastructural development, social class structures, and land ownership inequalities. Overall, the process of British colonialism set the precedence for the political economic development of Belize leading to the current political economic context.

### **Articulating Tourism**

After independence in 1981, the sugar industry continued to decline. By 1985, the Tate and Lyle Company, one of the Belize's largest producers and exporters of refined sugar, reduced drastically their sugar production and even imported sugar to satisfy the domestic market (Bolland 1991:89). While the sugar industry faltered, citrus, and non-agricultural industries such as fishing and textiles began to account for larger percentages of domestic exports (Figure 4.2). Looking at the export percentages, it appears that Belize's economic diversification process had increased, however, the Belizean economy remained tied to the success of the sugar industry.

Overall, agriculture replaced the once dominant lumber industry, securing approximately 63 percent of all domestic exports. In an agricultural context, sugar production continued to command the industry, accounting for 52 percent of all agricultural exports. Even with the significant economic diversification attempted since the 1960's, Belize's economic structures

remained contingent on the demands and fluctuations of the international market, especially sugar.



Economically, Belize's dependency on imported goods, coupled with the inconsistent export market, resulted in a constant trade deficit. Due to rises and falls in the sugar market, during the 1980's, this deficiency fluctuated between 20 and five percent. Overall, the deficit averaged 13 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, or \$50 million annually (Barry 1990:19; Bolland 1986:71). By 1992, Belize's deficit reached \$104 million (Worldmark 1995, 40). To alleviate the economic liability, Belize has relied on grants, foreign investments, remittances from Belizeans' abroad, as well as tourism, which can often lead to further economic inequalities (Bolland 1986:71; Wilk 1990:135).

Agriculturally, Mark Moberg suggests that continuous deficiencies relate to governmental policies that emphasize the purchase of cheap imported foods over staple crop production (Moberg 1991, 1992b). When using price controls to discourage staple crop production, governmental market policies attempt to provide low cost foods for the working class citizens, especially in metropolitan areas, thus further focusing agricultural production on exporting (Moberg 1991:19). In Moberg's view, market policies have replaced colonial underdevelopment and landholding inequalities as the primary source of Belize's food self-sufficiency crisis (Moberg 1991, 1992b).

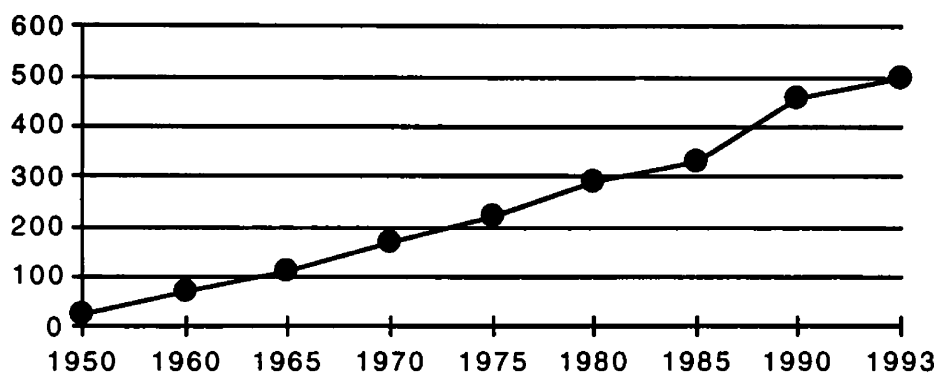
However, the structural inequalities and landholding inequalities resulting from colonial underdevelopment cannot be ignored. For example, in 1985, over 250,000 ha of land owned by the Belizean government was sold to United States investors, contrary to laws forbidding such transactions. This land deal not only represents the Belizean governments need of foreign investments for economic development, related to colonial underdevelopment, but it also indicates that Belize is becoming increasingly tied to the United States (Bolland 1991:89-90).

For Belize, amid the balance of trade deficit and continued economic restructuring and diversification, tourism emerged as a new industry. As discussed earlier, the tourism boom occurred on a global scale, increasing dramatically by the 1980's and has continued (Figure 4.3). During this time period, many developing nations recognized the economic potential of the tourism industry. Unlike other Caribbean - Central American countries, who saw drastic rises and falls during the 1960's, Belize's tourism industry was undeveloped (Pearce, D. 1984:293). In contrast, tourism has grown gradually

in Belize averaging 11,000 visitors per year during the 1960's, 30,000 in the 1970's, rising to 60,000 in the 1980's (Pearce, D. 1984:293; Wheat 1994:17).

**Figure 4.3**

**Trends in Global Tourism, Since 1950**  
in Millions of Travelers



Source: World Tourism Organization, 1994

Prior to independence, the tourism industry in Belize lacked organized planning as well as many basic services and infrastructure. Facilities that did exist were rudimentary and generated by individual effort and initiatives (Boo 1990:4; Low 1991:40; Pearce D. 1984:293). Primarily, tourists during these introductory years were considered in-transit and expeditionary tourists (Low 1991:39). The in-transit tourists, similar to Valene Smith's 'Unusual Tourist' type, were generally young, on low budgets, traveling throughout Central America, and attracted to Belize as a unique destination. The expeditionary tourist, or 'Elite Tourist,' sometimes focused their travels on special interests such as ornithology and archaeology, used short stay guest houses, and visited other Central American countries on their tour (Low 1991:39).

As the official independence of Belize drew closer, the United Nations Development Programme initiated the Belize Public Investment Program (BPIP), which attempted to expand the development in Belize through agriculture, fishing, forestry, housing, and tourism (Pearce D. 1984:293). Through the Belize Public Investment Program, Belize recognized the potential for tourism as a major contributor to the economy due to the proximity of the North American market as well as the numerous tourist attractions (Fernandez 1989:39; Pearce D. 1984:294-5).

After independence tourism received more attention from the Belizean government, which placed tourism as its fourth priority (Boo 1990:4).<sup>4</sup> With the 1984 political election of the Manuel Esquivel and the United Democratic Party (UDP), tourism advanced to be the second development priority (Boo 1990:4; Higinio and Munt 1993:9). Since the greater focus toward tourism, the industry has increased and contributed greatly to the foreign economic exchange of Belize (Table 4.2).

A significant boost for the tourism industry occurred with the release of the government's Integrated Tourism Policy and Strategy Statement in 1988. Until this statement, the tourism industry received little direction and economic support from the government. The Integrated Tourism Policy and Strategy Statement addressed the positive and negative aspects of tourism development, infrastructural needs, and the roles of the government and private developers. This strategy statement, also, discussed the potential economic gains from tourism receipts; showed concern for the local peoples competing with foreign investors; identified specific tourism projects and infrastructural developments; granted concessions to tourism developers, illustrated the need to protect natural resources; and put tourism

development in the hands of the Ministry of Tourism and other governing boards (Boo 1990:5-7). With the greater interest in the tourism industry, it grew to become the second largest industry, behind sugar (Barry 1989:27).

**Table 4.2**

**Tourism Statistics For Belize, 1983-1994**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Tourist Arrivals (approx. total)</b>	<b>Tourist Receipts (in \$ millions)</b>	<b>Tourism Expenditures (in \$ millions)</b>
1983	64,000	8	6
1984	88,000	8	6
1985	93,000	11	5
1986	94,000	21	5
1987	99,000	24	5
1988	142,000	48	7
1989	172,829	79	8
1990	216,395	91	7
1991	215,442	95	8
1992	247,346	108	14
1993	284,487	143	21
1994	328,078	150	n/a

Source: Europa 1996, 1995; United Nations 1995, and World Tourism Organization 1994, 1988

In 1991, the Government of Belize, through the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, issued an updated Integrated Tourism Policy and Strategy Statement, which redirected tourism development under the guidelines of ecotourism (Government of Belize, 1991). The Belizean Government defines ecotourism as "the careful husbanding of Belize's natural resources, such as the barrier reef, inland forests and savannas, rivers, wildlife, flora and fauna and the majestic Mayan city states for controlled tourism with a specific sensitivity to possible harm or effect of those resources" (Government of Belize 1991:1). The Belizean government approach to ecotourism follows a

broader definition of ecotourism, as discussed in chapter 3. The government of Belize highlights six important topics with this statement:

1. Increased Belizean entrepreneurship in all aspects of the industry and increased availability of loan and equity capital at concessionary rates for the small Belizean investors.
2. Emphasis on the creation of 'small' - up to twenty room - lodges and hotels in the districts and on those cayes already catering to tourists.
3. Increased education, training and awareness at all levels regarding the benefits and careers available in tourism - directly and indirectly.
4. Firm public commitment and private sector drive towards integrating Belize's tourism product with other countries in the region, i.e. through Mundo Maya, and with our Caribbean neighbours via the Caribbean Tourist Organization
5. The continued creation of suitable parks and reserves on land and sea to ensure that Belizeans 100 years from now, and beyond, will be able to enjoy a Belize unspoiled by hasty, harmful and unsanctioned development or lack of care by this generation, the present custodians of this beautiful land.
6. Increased professional marketing of Belizean tourism on the part of both the private and public sector.

These guidelines identify the areas of growth necessary to develop ecotourism projects, establish the government's commitment to natural resource conservation, and emphasize the participation of Belizeans. Included in the Integrated Tourism Statement (1991), the Belize government highlights the four main categories of tourists that the ecotourism developments should target to attract. Using the typology reported by the World Resources Institute, the four ecotourist categories focused on are: Hard Core Nature tourists, Dedicated Nature tourists, Mainstream Nature tourists, and Casual

Nature tourists (Lindberg 1991). These categories can represent a wide range of tourist interests and accommodation expectations; for instance, scientific interests such as ornithology to leisure oriented pursuits such as sun bathing and accommodations from rustic cabins to Western-style hotels. The Belize government understands that improper development of the tourism industry can lead to negative consequences, thus encourages education and location appropriate growth. For example, large hotels are suitable for construction in Belize City, however it would be inappropriate for rural areas. Overall, the Belizean Government views ecotourism as a mechanism to develop the currently insufficient infrastructure, diversify their economic base, generate substantial economic gains, protect natural resources, and endure. (Government of Belize 1991).

Since the acceptance of the 1991 Integrated Tourism Statement, the monetary support of the tourism industry has doubled and tripled (as shown in Table 4.2). Tourism's contribution to the Gross National Product of Belize has grown to 26 percent in the early 1990's (Higinio and Munt 1993:9). Belize, also, has become an important contributor to the further understanding of ecotourism by hosting two international conferences, the First Caribbean Ecotourism Conference and the First World Congress on Tourism and the Environment. While the Integrated Tourism Statement and international conferences show the Belizean government's commitment to the development of ecotourism, the realization of these goals is less evident.

Tourism researchers criticize ecotourism projects because they commonly reproduce the social, economic, and environmental problems found in conventional or mass tourism (Cater 1992:19; Higinio and Munt 1993:9). In many cases, these negative consequences can prove to be more



detrimental in ecotourism, since ecotours offer travel into "previously undeveloped areas, with delicately balanced physical and cultural environments" (Cater 1992:19). Belize, even with its commitment to sustainable ecotourism, is not immune to these problems.

Ecotourism is playing an integral role in the contemporary political economy of Belize, especially in the last decade. For Belize, tourism, especially ecotourism, is an expanding new process for foreign economic exchange. Since ecotourism is growing rapidly, it is critical to plan, monitor, and continue studying its' development. Due to the recent development of the tourism industry, Belize provides an excellent case study to address the negative consequences of ecotourism. By understanding how ecotourism articulates in the political economic and historical context of Belize, the negative consequences of ecotourism can be examined further. In the next chapter, several specific consequences of ecotourism development in Belize will be discussed, providing the setting to develop a more sustainable ecotourism. Creating sustainable ecotourism is critical because environmentally conscious tourism will remain high on tourist agendas, and despite its faults' ecotourism projects promote a more sustainable form of tourism than mass tourism (Cater 1992:20).

## Endnotes for Chapter 4:

<sup>1</sup> For a list and brief description of Belize's natural resources, see *The Directory of Protected Areas and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest in Belize*. by Simon Zizman, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The discussion of Belizean History has been constructed from several sources: Tom Barry's *Belize: A Country Guide*, Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1989; O. Nigel Bolland's *Belize: A New Nation in Central America*, Boulder, Colorado. Westview Press, Inc. 1986; Julio A. Fernandez's *Belize: Case Study for Democracy in Central America*, Great Britain. Averbury. 1989, Mark Moberg's *Citrus, Strategy, & Class: The Politics of Development in Southern Belize*. Iowa City, Iowa. University of Iowa Press. 1992, and Assad Shoman's *Belize: An Authoritarian Democratic State in Central America*, Second Annual Studies on Belize, Belize City, Belize, SPEAR, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> The political economy and development of Belize was constructed using Bolland 1986; Fernandez 1989; Shoman 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Since the 1950's, George Price and the People's United Party dominated the political system in Belize. Price became the premier 1964 and served as prime minister once Belize became independent. Worldmark (see Bolland 1986:111-138 and Fernandez 1989:45-76, for more information on political formation in Belize).

## **Chapter 5**

### **Developing Sustainable Tourism**

Understanding the articulation of tourism in Belize's historical and economic development provides the background in which to create and manage ecotourism projects. In developing recommendations, the ecosystem perspective allows researchers to view the interactions between political economic, environmental, and social systems within an encompassing framework.<sup>1</sup> Through an ecosystem approach specific contexts can be viewed without losing sight of the whole picture.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in Belize, ecotourism has risen primarily as an economic phenomenon, however, it has distinctive social and environmental implications. Since these systems are interconnected, historically and in the modern context, critical factors that effect the political economy of Belize also influence social and environmental issues. Therefore, identifying and addressing the structural inequalities evident in Belize's political economy while focusing on contemporary governmental policies of sustainable development, aids in creating more sustainable forms of ecotourism. Before recommendations can be made, a further understanding of the problems facing sustainable development is necessary. Once unsustainable relationships are recognized, specific obstacles facing Belize's ecotourism development are discerned, allowing planners to create strategies to alleviate future problems.

#### **Conflicts in Sustainability**

Since tourism relies on environmental and cultural settings as selling tools, an interest in sustainability is not surprising (Murphy 1995:274). Even

though a precise definition of sustainable development remains elusive; generally, researchers agree that sustainable development must stress meeting present needs, without jeopardizing the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural needs of future generations (Barbier 1987; McCool 1995; Pearce, D. et al 1990; Redclift 1992; van der Burgh & van der Straaten 1994). Thus sustainable development "builds on the old principles of conservation and stewardship, but it offers a more proactive stance, that incorporates continued economic growth in a more ecological and equitable manner" (Murphy 1994:275-6).

While the idea of sustainable development provides an attractive goal for policy-makers, the implementation of programs based on the concept's principles remains difficult (Pigram 1990 and Linden 1993 in Burr 1995:8; McCool 1995:3). Part of the difficulty in achieving the goals of sustainability stem from the merging of two concepts that continually are in conflict. Inherently, sustainability implies the maintenance of a balanced system, on the contrary, development refers to a growing system (Illich in Burr 1995:9).

Conflicts in sustainable development arise in two primary categories; questions of emphasis (Dixon and Fallon in McCool 1995; Redclift and Goodman 1991; Redclift 1992), and the development of structural inequalities (McCool 1995; Miller 1995; Redclift and Goodman 1991; Redclift 1992). Questions of emphasis refer to the difficulties in identifying what is to be sustained. For example, should new developments sustain production levels or consumption levels (Redclift 1992:25); social, political, or cultural processes (McCool 1995:4, 1996). In terms of ecotourism; Is it more important to be concerned with environmental protection, economic development, or cultural preservation? This is a difficult question to answer, since ecotourism

attempts to provide a balance between political economic, environmental, and cultural systems, therefore the question of emphasis needs to focus on the interactions between these systems.

The second conflict, structural inequalities, is based in the political economic world system. Structural inequalities refer to the global polarization of wealth, income, and political power separating industrialized or developed nations from developing nations (Frank and Gills 1993:38-40).<sup>3</sup> Globally, structural inequalities formed as the current developed nations politically and economically exploited the resources of other areas, simultaneously causing underdevelopment in these exploited regions, commonly referred to as today's developing nations (Webster 1990:85). For developing nations, the process of underdevelopment created strong ties of dependency, placing them in a secondary role within the political economic world system.

Structural inequalities also can occur in the political economy of national and local levels. For example, in terms of the access to resources, it is estimated that 20 percent of the population share 80 percent of the world's goods, while the remaining 80 percent divide the leftover 20 percent (Frank and Gills 1993:38). The estimated access to resources represent the large separation between 'the haves' or world's elite classes and 'the have-nots' or global underclasses. Accepting that the developed nations and elite classes control a significant portion of the resources, the distribution of wealth between developing nations and developed nations widens. The distribution of wealth and structural inequalities are complicated by transnational corporations, who have gained economic and political power by transcending geographical boundaries and influencing political economic structures in

developing nations (Miller 1995). Structural inequalities, therefore, effect the processes of development in developing nations, influencing the creation and sustainability of ecotourism projects.

Ecologically, structural inequalities affect how people perceive and use the natural resources and the environment (Miller 1995:146). For example, in developed nations, natural resources and the environment hold aesthetic value, thus conservation measures are accepted as appropriate uses of the environment. In comparison, environmental conservation issues in developing countries, lacking equal access to resources, regard the environment as the means to survival, providing the basic needs of the populace as well as an avenue toward future development. (Miller 1995:146; Redclift and Goodman 1991:4; Redclift 1992:26). Ecological perceptions and use are critical to the success of sustainable development and the development of ecotourism projects.

Considering the conflicts surrounding sustainability, a better understanding of the interactions between environmental, economic, and social systems provides the necessary tools to create a sustainable form of development (Barbier 1987:101). While methods differ, many researchers agree that all three systems need to benefit in forming successful sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> Edward Barbier (1987, also see Burr 1995), asserts that ecological, economic, and social systems need to work in conjunction, through a process of trade-offs, in order to obtain a sustainable form of development. For each of these systems, human society has applied goals that represent the characteristics of a successful system (Burr 1995:10). For example, economic systems may stress improving equity, quelling poverty, and satisfying basic needs; ecological systems may emphasize diversity,

biological productivity, and resilience; and social systems may promote cultural diversity, equality, and justice (Burr 1995:10). Since environmental, economic, and social factors interconnect, constantly change, and are often contradictory, the utopian goal of maximizing all three systems at the same time is impossible. Therefore, these inter-system trade-offs need to be adaptive and committed to the goals of sustainable development (Barbier 1987; Burr 1995). By identifying the goals of the environmental, economic, and social systems as well as their interactions, the questions of emphasis and the structural inequalities are addressed.

### **Toward Sustainable Tourism in Belize: Problems**

Since ecotourism follows the concept of sustainability, determining the problems and conflicts within sustainable development benefit the creation of sustainable tourism. Marian A.L. Miller (1995) identifies several level-specific strategies that can lead to the goals of sustainable development. Globally, debt relief for developing nations, changes in transnational corporations (TNC) conduct of operations, and reform in international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will reduce structural inequalities (Miller 1995).

On a national level, developing nations need to create their own opportunities by using loans and other resources to benefit the majority of the population, not just the urban populations and elites. This would require developed nations to create loans designed to enhance the economies of developing nations, regardless of self interest.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, developing nations need to cooperate with each other to improve their own capabilities,

while not completely depending on developed nations for support. (Miller 1995).

On a local level, the role of the local community is crucial to the success of sustainable development (Barr 1995; Christensen 1995; Drake 1991; Ghai and Vivian 1992; Miller 1995). Local communities have two primary roles. First, the local communities must challenge global and national strategies, who often ignore local opinion, to consider their needs in any development procedure. One way of confronting the lack of local participation is through the development of community based nongovernmental organizations that could represent the local's interests (Miller 1995:151). Last, local communities must strive to support strategies that benefit the entire community, not just the local elites. (Miller 1995).

Miller's general guidelines idealistically require a redistribution of global political economic power, however, they address the fundamental problems and factors facing successful sustainable development; structural inequalities, development policies, and the lack of local participation. While the development of sustainable tourism parallels the problems and solutions of sustainable development, differences do occur. Thus, a closer look at specific ecotourism development problems and how they interact within the political economic context of Belize will aid in the creation, adjustment, and maintenance of sustainable tourism projects.

Belize has stated a commitment to the concept of sustainable development and ecotourism, emphasizing the conservation of natural resources and the participation of local communities, however, the implementation of ecotourism programs has met with difficulty. While



there are global, national, and local problems and solutions, national and local issues should remain the primary focus for Belize.

There are three fundamental reasons for focusing on local and national levels. First, the participation of local communities is critical to the success of sustainable development projects (Drake 1991; Ghai and Vivian 1992; Miller 1995). Second, when considering the global political economic context, developing nations, such as Belize, lack the leverage to influence the economic world system. Last, even though national governments continually operate within the global context; national policies and decisions effect primarily the process of sustainable development at regional and local levels (Miller 1995:149-151). Thus, analyzing the following examples of failed sustainability, focusing on the political economic, social, and environmental interactions, will aid in constructing recommendations to decrease future problems.

One of the primary reasons developing nations, such as Belize, implement tourism projects is to diversify their current economic strategies. Even though foreign economic exchange may increase, actual economic gains tend to be exaggerated. For example, the World Bank estimated that 55 percent of tourism receipts in developing nations return to Western countries through direct payments, trade, and foreign ownership (Frueh 1988 cited in Boo 1990a:13; Norris 1992; Warner 1991). Ecotourism in Belize is not immune to these economic losses. In Belize, these structural inequalities occur in four key areas; infrastructure development, access to land, resource extraction, and balance of trade deficits. Many structural inequalities, existing in Belize's modern political economic context, are rooted the process of British colonization.

Globally, the tourism industry is controlled by developed nations and transnational corporations. For example, when tourists in developed nations plan their travel and accommodation needs through firms based in their country of origin, the destination does not benefit from these transactions (Cater 1992:19; Cater 1994:72). Furthermore, after tourists arrive in Belize many of them expect Western-style services, therefore imports increase to satisfy tourists' needs, creating a tourism industry that is not directly involving local products and services, substantially reducing the net tourism receipts for Belize (Cater 1992:19). For instance, Kreg Lindberg and Jeremy Enriquez estimate that a 25 percent increase in the purchase of local agricultural goods, given current levels of tourist expenditures, would increase tourism-generated sales by \$8.9 million and tourism-generated wages by \$1.4 million (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:28). However, this increase in domestically produced goods may be difficult to obtain, partially due to current market policies that encourage the production of exported goods (Moberg 1991, 1992b). In conjunction, the increased imports, travel services provided by foreign, and market policies negatively effect the balance of trade further tying Belize to outside forces.

Historically, the development of domestic agriculture has been successfully suppressed by elite members of Belizean society, who also controlled and encouraged imports to satisfy the agricultural needs. Relying on imports has created a pattern of debt and dependency that began with the Baymen's necessity, continued through merchant elites' suppression of agriculture, and remains in the form of policies providing lower food costs to urban populations. With the rise of ecotourism this pattern intensifies, since

foreign visitors strain local resources and expect Western amenities; requiring additional importation, increasing the balance of trade deficit.

In terms of land ownership, foreign land holdings, in theory, are restricted to 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> in urban areas and 40,500 m<sup>2</sup> in rural areas, however, current estimates suggest that 90 percent of all coastal developments in Belize are owned and operated by foreigners (Cater 1994:75; 1992:20). Land consolidation parallels the structural inequalities found in hyper-importation of goods. Land controls passing from the Baymen elite, to merchants, then to transnational corporations have haunted Belizean political economic development. Today, land consolidation resembles the inequities of colonial times, where a small number owned a majority, thereby influencing the political economic context of development. Power relations have historically followed the ownership of land thus elites, expatriates, and foreign investors often determine how land is used. The land inequity issue threatens the sustainability of ecotourism projects, especially when land owners disregard the interests of the local communities. For example, a US-AID sponsored project planned an *all inclusive* multi-million dollar development in Belize City, without local representation or plans to benefit the local economy (Higinio and Munt 1993:9). Developments, such as this, continue the disparity between elites and local populations threatening the process of sustainable development.

Currently, structural inequalities even exist on a local level. At the Community Baboon Sanctuary, for instance, one of the seven villages that surround the area accounted for 55 percent of the profits earned from tourism (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:29). While the reasons for this inequity may include village location and sanctuary involvement policies, it demonstrates

that structural inequalities permeate the political economic context of Belize, creating a separation between social categories. In other cases, much of the tourism industry is directed by the powerful expatriate community, often North Americans, who demand stricter zoning laws obstructing further tourism developments (Higinio and Munt 1993:10).

Furthermore, under the rationale of sustainable development and ecotourism the government bought back 20,000 acres of Ambergris Caye, designating half of the land for conservation, 2,500 acres to Belizeans, and 7,500 acres to a U.S. developer. The proposed ecotourism development includes at least one international hotel, several upscale lodges, two all inclusive spa hotels, a couple of golf courses, luxury homes, polo fields and stables (Higinio and Munt 1993:10). Granted Belize's Integrated Tourism Policy allows for site appropriate development, however this proposal ignores local concerns, misrepresents the concept of sustainable development, and displays continued foreign control over political economic resources in Belize. This project also brings to the fore the indiscriminate use of the term ecotourism in Belize and the economic seduction of high volume mass tourism over the development of low density sustainable ecotourism projects (Higinio and Munt 1993).

As a result of foreign involvement and tourism demands, the costs of land, foods, and other goods, often become inflated beyond the reach of local populations or have caused low domestic consumption (Cater 1995:73-5, 1992:20; Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:25). The inflated costs caused by tourist demands and foreign ownership may even undermine the benefits created by the increased local labor market (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:25, 31-2). Additionally, the jobs created by ecotourism in Belize tend to be few, seasonal,

and low-paying (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:25; Wheat 1994:18)), thus taking local residents away from activities that may be more economically sustainable to the community, such as subsistence farming (Lea 1988:47-8). In relation to ecotourism, inflated prices and the creation of wage labor further strengthens the position of elites and foreign investors in the development of the industry.

Another factor of ecotourism involving foreign investment is the development of a reliable infrastructure including roads, sewage disposal, and water resources. Belize's current transportation system provides only a few well-maintained roads, connecting major cities and agricultural communities, however smaller roads have "improved little over the crude forest tracks in use during the heyday of mahogany" (Moberg 1992a:30, 36). These smaller road systems are often impassable during the rainy season limiting access to interior destinations and causing tourists to find other sources of travel such as boat or plane, increasing traveling costs, or they remain in more developed locations, which are designed for higher volumes of people, not necessarily ecotourism (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:39).

Sewage disposal and the availability of water resources are another important concern for Belize, especially in island development, where slight changes can upset the delicate ecosystems (Gibson and Gillett 1991:18; Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:76). Sewage disposal cannot adequately handle the waste produced in parts of the country, especially in rural areas, and this is complicated by increases in tourism (Pearce 1984:296). Generally, public water supplies in Belize are safe, however, in rural areas, where ecotourism projects are developed, safety tests are infrequent, even though inhabitants commonly use surface waters for drinking and washing (King et. al. 1993:80). The lack of

infrastructure to handle ecotourism requires additional investment, often foreign, which inhibits the process of sustainable development.

Due to the ecological diversity in Belize, infrastructural developments require careful planning to avoid negative environmental consequences. For example, coastal developments, including the building of hotels for ecotourism, cause the destruction of two distinctive environmental zones, the coastal mangroves and the inland savannas -- specifically, topsoil from the interior savannas provides the firm building surface to cover the coastal mangrove (Cater 1994:78). Sewage produced during construction is often untreated and can destroy delicate mangrove swamps and coral reefs (Nidever 1991:9). In another example, a U.S. owned resort owner, in Belize, allegedly blew up part of the coastline in order to make his resort more accessible to visitors (Higinio and Munt 1993:8). In both cases, part of the ecological diversity, which draws ecotourists to Belize, disappears. These examples also demonstrate the tendency to develop larger scale tourism projects, even in delicate habitats, where ecotourism may be more appropriate.

The influx of tourism can strain infrastructural developments causing additional environmental consequences. On Ambergris Caye, the concentration of hotels, restaurants, bars, and other tourists developments have overtaxed the sewage system, depleting fresh drinking water supplies (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:24). Tourist demands for fresh seafood, in Belize, have caused a decline in the available commercial seafood, such as lobster and shrimp (Cater 1992:20; Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:49). Complicating the selective depletion of tourist demanded seafood, live-aboard diving boats

share the same waters, but do not contribute to the local economy (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:49).

Another problem with ecotourism in Belize, as well as worldwide, is the assumption that ecotourists and ecotourism organizations will act ecologically and culturally sensitive (Cater 1992:20). In Belize, through careless diving practices and the illegal collection of unique species, ecotourists have contributed to the increase in black band disease, which attacks broken, even touched coral, ending centuries of growth (Cater 1992:20; 1994:76; Mahler and Wotkyns 1991:23).

In the interior, ecotourism has encouraged the development of modern facilities in areas of tourist attractions. For example, in the heart of a pre-colonial Mayan ceremonial plaza an ecotourist lodge was built, equipped with electricity and a bar, and the guests are encouraged to climb on the ruins (Belize Currents 1990 cited in Wight 1994:42). Considering that many of these ecotourist lodges are owned and operated by foreigners, local communities do not share in the economic benefits. Interior developments, such as this, need to be conscious of the location's appropriateness and sensitive to the unique environmental and cultural settings to create a sustainable tourist area.

These examples stress the importance of the actions of visitors as well as hosts in developing an ecotourism project. As more and more tourists visit Belize these environmental factors become increasingly critical. Overall, ecotourism developments in coastal, island, and interior environments represent a economic transfer from the extractive resources of the past, such as the lumber industry, to a more service oriented economy. However, many of the negative aspects remain.

For Belize, structural inequalities and the lack of local participation and benefits, cause the most pressing problems for sustainable development. Many current forms of structural inequality are rooted in regional colonial development. Belize is no exception. Most economic industries in Belize are affected by these structural inequalities, including the development of ecotourism. Land consolidation since the time of the Baymen, coupled with market policies encouraging export production, has inhibited the development of agriculture to support local demands. Without a strong agricultural base, Belize has relied on foreign imports to provide a large portion of subsistence foodstuffs. With the arrival of ecotourism, the demand for agricultural and other products increases, thus, Belize must rely on increased foreign imports to satisfy the demand. The need for imported products causes a deficit in the balance of trade, and with foreign investment being used to develop the tourism industry, other industries such as export cash crops, become stressed to offset the debt. The cash crop industry, dominated by developed nations and transnational corporations and the uncontrollable demands of foreign markets, presents an unreliable source of economic exchange, thus Belize's political economic context remains under foreign control. Overall, it seems that Belize, with ecotourism, is searching for a new industry to replace the extractive industries of the past, such as the diminished lumber industry and the inconsistent sugar market. However, the ecotourism industry should not be viewed as a new cash crop, and must be developed in conjunction with other industries to be sustainable.



## **Toward Sustainable Tourism in Belize: Solutions**

Since social, environmental, and political economic variables operate within an encompassing ecosystem, focusing on their interactions and identifying the major problems facing sustainable development and ecotourism aids in constructing recommendations to abate the structural inequalities and the lack of local benefits. Recommendations need to address global, national, and local concerns. Even though global policies and events effect the success of sustainable development, developing nations, due to structural inequalities, lack political economic power to direct global policies, thus need to concentrate on local and national policies and goals.

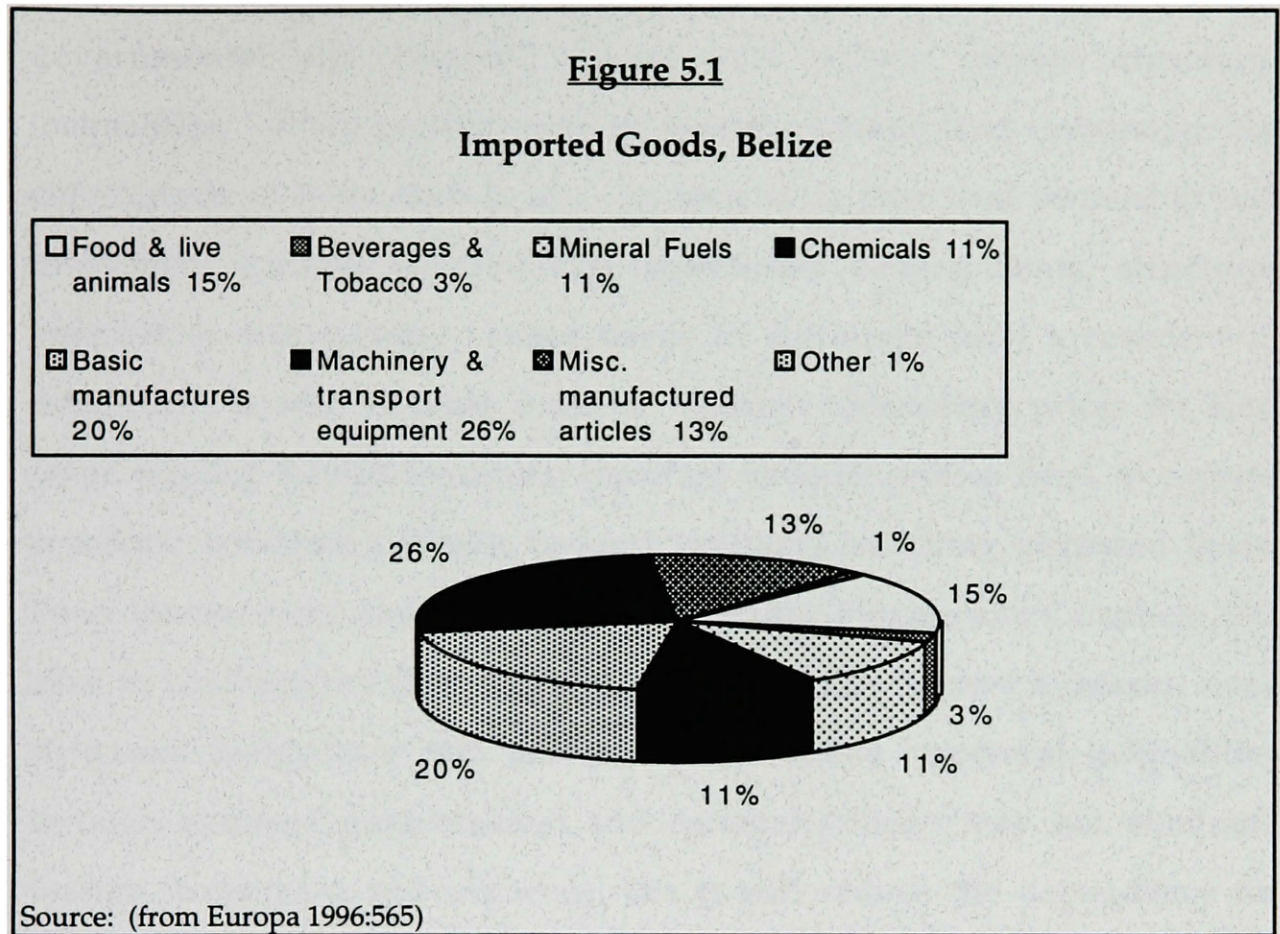
In the global political economic context, the development of sustainable ecotourism in Belize is one of the many economic strategies affected by structural inequalities. For Belize, ecotourism provides a much needed addition to their economic diversity, however, it does not guarantee a sustainable form of development. In lieu of global structural inequalities, Marian A.L. Miller's (1995) call for debt relief, changes in transnational corporations conduct of operations and reform in international loan agencies, become imperative. Reform on a global scale is unfeasible, however, if there is no sense of a global community, thus education and awareness of sustainable development is necessary (Miller 1995:149). While this seems an impossible feat, recognizing unsustainable patterns in economic-environmental interconnections, historically and currently, can lead development studies in a more fruitful direction (van der Bergh and van der Straaten 1994:209-212). Incorporating the social variable into this economic-environmental dilemma, researchers can determine the sustainability of projects on national and local levels.

The discussion in the previous section highlights some of the unsustainable practices relating to Belize's ecotourism industry. Identifying that many unsustainable ecotourism practices parallel the problems faced by sustainable development, requires recommendations to address sustainable tourism within the larger political economic context as well as on an industry specific level. With the understanding that decisions regarding development in Belize rest with the government and Belizeans, the following recommendations are put forth to aid in the process of determining the role of sustainable ecotourism in Belize's current political economic context. The recommendations have been separated into three basic categories: governmental and national policies; learning from the positive and negative aspects of ecotourism projects; and the importance of local participation and benefits.

### **Governmental and National Policies**

Governmental and national policies should attempt to alleviate the structural inequalities threatening the success of sustainable development and ecotourism. Economic restructuring and development cannot solve the problems facing sustainable development without political direction and a sustainable national consciousness (Wilk 1990:135). Richard Wilk suggests that hyper-importation, or the over consumption of imported goods, has caused the underdevelopment currently facing Belize (Wilk 1990). While these observations stress that the primary course of overcoming underdevelopment is through the process of 'culture building,' governmental and national policies emphasizing the ideas of sustainable development can reduce the structural inequalities, thereby aiding

ecotourism.<sup>6</sup> The imports creating the most strain on the balance of trade deficit include machinery, manufactured goods, mineral fuels, and foods (Figure 5.1). In looking at Figure 5.1, it is evident that Belize lacks the ability to produce manufactured goods and domestic foods. Suggesting that Belize needs to increase domestic production of manufactured goods and food resources is complicated by the structural inequalities that this process would induce. However, governmental and national policies directed toward the policies of sustainable development can limit the amount of imported goods needed. For example, even though Belize agricultural industry is limited by the availability of productive land,<sup>7</sup> market policies balancing the production of cash crops and domestic foods may alleviate the dependency on imported foods.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, when researching ecotourism in Belize, Kreg Lindberg and Jeremy Enriquez (1994) predicted that a 25 percent increase in the amount of agricultural goods locally produced would increase tourism-generated sales by nearly nine million dollars, thus reducing the dependency on imported goods. While it is unlikely that Belize will become self-sufficient, every reduction in imported products should be viewed as a step in the right direction (Wilk 1990:137).



Curbing imports is an important yet difficult process, especially when many of the imports are needed for development and are more cheaply produced in other countries (Bolland 1986). However, continued economic diversification, especially through domestic crop production, and seeking better deals with a more diverse group of trading partners can limit Belize's dependency of developed nations (Bolland 1986:71-3).<sup>9</sup> By cooperating with other developing nations, sharing resources and capabilities, developing nations can establish more equitable trade relationships and increase the ability to manage their own resources, leading to development on their own terms (Miller 1995:150).

The control of foreign investment and land ownership, through governmental and national policies, will reduce current structural inequalities. While policies exist to regulate foreign land ownership, the enforcement of these laws is lax. As long as foreign land ownership and investment continue to dominate ecotourism developments, structural inequalities will endure. Belize needs to encourage local investment in ecotourism as well as other projects. Current inflationary prices for land favor wealthy foreign investors, therefore national policies need to expand economic resources available to local investors, including increased loans, lower interest rates, and longer pay back periods (Morgan and Campbell 1993 cited in Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:33). As local investment increases, some structural inequalities will decrease. Addressing structural inequalities through enforced governmental and national policies may not eliminate foreign investment and influence, but it will reduce the dependency on foreign investors.

Besides alleviating structural inequalities, governmental and national policies should lead to increased and sustainable economic, environmental, and social gains. Policies should encourage ecotourism to pay for itself (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994). While sustainability can be achieved using a variety of methods, three methods, will be highlighted; entrance fees, matching the tourist and tourism experience, and linking ecotourism with other sustainable activities.

According to the ecotourism potential research conducted by Kreg Lindberg and Jeremy Enriquez, in 1993, current entrance fees for Belize's ecotourism sites are low or non-existent. Belize should develop a fee structure that is suitable to making profits, therefore aiding in the

sustainability of ecotourism projects. The research conducted showed that ecotourists are willing to pay fees for the use and protection of natural resources, especially scuba divers. A fee system needs to be flexible, tailored to the destination and activity, and cover the costs of operation (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994). For example, in a hypothetical fee study based on current visitation data at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, it was determined that the fees of BZ \$2.50 to Belizeans and a BZ \$10 to foreigners would cover 100 percent of ecotourism costs, generate \$56,274 that would cover 34 percent of traditional management costs, and would not significantly effect visitation (BZ \$1 = US \$2).

While other fee systems were tested, including same costs to all visitors, fee structures should remain multi-tiered with lower costs for Belizeans than international tourists (Cater 1994:38; Weaver 1994:173). A flexible multi-tiered fee structure has several advantages to Belize as well as the ecotourism destination. First, charging high fees may deny locals, who lack the disposable income of international visitors, from using the protected areas, but a small entrance fee only charges people who use the area (Lindberg 1991:13). Second, charging foreigners a higher fee requires the ecotourist to pay for maintaining the site, after all, foreign ecotourists do not pay taxes for the upkeep, but receive the benefit of using the site (Lindberg 1991:13). Last, an adjustable fee allows ecotourism managers to regulate visitation through price, therefore increasing fees to protect the site from over visitation or lowering fees to encourage visitors (Lindberg 1991: 13-14; Lindberg 1991 and Wood 1993 in Weaver 1994:173).

Differential fee structures have been used successfully by other ecotourism destinations, such as the Galapagos National Park, Ecuador,

where fees generated by ecotourism exceeded \$2.5 million with fees charging foreigners \$40 and Ecuadorians around \$6, and even with a recent fee increase to \$80 revenues are expected to grow (Lindberg 1991:12). Most importantly, after fees are collected, the revenues should be reinvested in the site, therefore ensuring sustainable ecotourism development (Cater 1994:83).

The second group of recommendations proclaims that sustainable ecotourism development can be enhanced by matching the tourist with the tourist activity. Understanding the type of tourist and their expected tourism benefits will help Belize develop sustainable ecotourism projects. In Belize, the indiscriminate use of the term 'ecotourism' causes controversy, often misrepresenting the type of tourism actually being developed (Higinio and Munt 1993:9). Adhering to national policies devoted to creating sustainable ecotourism projects should be strictly enforced.

In the tourism industry, Belize has become one of the world's premier ecotourism sites (Wheat 1994:17). In part, this esteemed position is related to Belize's ecological diversity, the infancy of their tourism industry, and their stated commitment to sustainable development. As an ecotourism destination, Belize has a competitive advantage; on the other hand, Belize is less competitive for the mass tourism market (Economic Intelligence Unit 1993 cited in Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:21). Therefore, ecotourism projects should be the focus of future tourism developments.

As discussed in Chapter 3, ecotourism, when developed and managed properly, can remedy some of the negative consequences of mass tourism. Governmental and national policies focusing and marketing ecotourists should be encouraged. Lindberg (1991) identified four groups of ecotourist: Hard-core, Dedicated, Mainstream, and Casual. Each group has different

expectations from tourism, often requiring different styles of tourism and accommodations. Specifically for Belize, research conducted by Vincent Palacio and Stephen McCool (1993) identified four primary groups: Nature Escapists, Ecotourists, Comfortable Naturalists, and Passive Players.<sup>10</sup> While additional research needs to be conducted, both of these typologies can aid in creating tourism programs that target ecotourists. Once the primary groups of tourists are identified, the government should help the private and public sectors develop and promote the ecotourism industry, including media campaigns, improved market strategies, and encourage longer, multi-regional visits.

Lastly, when ecotourism projects are planned, connecting ecotourism with other local industries can benefit the entire region (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:34). Government policies, such as agricultural market policies, should encourage local production and local consumption of foods. Another industry commonly linked to ecotourism is construction (Morgan and Campbell 1992 cited in Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:34). Increasing local production and consumption limits the amount of imported goods needed to develop the ecotourism site, therefore helping ecotourism and the region become more self-sufficient. In regions where ecotourism programs are being developed, additional industries that could add to the attraction of the region as well as benefit the local community should be explored (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994:36). For example, in locations where flora and fauna are important to the site, a biological program created to teach locals as well as tourists about the local plants and animals would provide an additional reason for tourists to visit and help train locals to be guides. Linking the



ecotourism industry with the local production available can increase local consumption and benefit the whole community.

In summary, governmental and national policies have two main objectives; alleviating structural inequalities and encouraging sustainable development of ecotourism. Reducing structural inequalities requires curbing imports, developing appropriate market policies, increasing economic diversification and domestic crop production, finding mutually beneficial trade partners, controlling foreign investment, and encouraging local investment in ecotourism. While many of the governmental and national policies encourage sustainable development, the government should direct ecotourism project to pay for themselves. Methods to create sustainable ecotourism project include developing a fee structure, matching tourists with tourism experiences, and linking ecotourism with other industries. Overall, by using governmental and national policies to address structural inequalities and encouraging sustainable development, Belize can create a sustainable ecotourism industry.

### **Retrospective Ecotourism**

Learning from the positive and negative impacts of ecotourism developments allows the Belize to address current problems and anticipate future problems. Focusing on Belizean examples does not imply that Belize should disregard information learned from ecotourism developments in other countries, but allows for the understanding of successes and failures in the political economic context of Belize. The problems caused by structural inequalities illustrate the difficulties of creating sustainable tourism projects in developing nations, such as Belize. Structural inequalities, especially

through foreign land ownership and foreign investment, need to be addressed on the national level. The recommendations in the previous section attempt to resolve some of the major structural inequalities facing Belize. This section will look at three examples and address the positive and negative aspects of ecotourism on a local level.

The development of the Community Baboon Sanctuary ('baboon' is the Creole name for the black howler monkey) provides an opportunity to look at the role of private lands in ecotourism development (Horwich 1990; Horwich and Lyons 1993; Lipske 1992). The development of the Community Baboon Sanctuary formed through the co-operation of local private landowners who have voluntarily agreed to moderate their slash and burn agricultural production to conserve the habitat of the black howler monkey (Cater 1992:20). The conservation of the area provided the impetus to the development of tourism. Tourism has increased rapidly since the beginning of the project from 20 - 30 people per year in 1985 to an estimated 2,000 - 3,000 in 1989 (Horwich 1990:102). During this time, under the supervision of sanctuary staff and local participants, only a small number of rooms were available for guests. Plans were developed to establish low interest loans to a limited number of families, who contributed to the sanctuary, participated in tourism, could build the cabin, and repay the loan (Horwich 1990:102). Economically, in 1992, tourism earned BZ \$16,834 for the sanctuary, 55 percent of the profits, however, were concentrated in only one of the seven surrounding villages (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994). While the Community Baboon Sanctuary presents a good example of establishing a private reserve through voluntary conservation, it is not without its flaws. Robert Horwich and the sanctuary management team continue to monitor the progress and

are attempting to address the flaws of their management plan (Lipske 1992:42). It is evident that policies are needed to address the local structural inequalities. It appears that part of the problem is the process of distributing the loans. Loans tend to be made available only to people currently involved at the sanctuary and who have the capacity to repay. Thus families who need to concentrate on subsistence farming, lack the time to build cabins or the capital to use as collateral may not get the opportunity to participate in the ecotourism project. This inequitable situation is likely to exist in other communities developing ecotourism, thus opportunities need to be extended to a larger percentage of the community through government incentives, such as long term, low interest loans (Lindberg and Enriquez 1994).

The creation of the Manatee Special Development Area provides the opportunity to look at ecotourism development related to government designation. The Manatee Special Development Area was established in 1991 with the intention of (1) developing a locally supported and sustainable multi-use reserve; (2) supporting and benefiting local rural culture; and (3) supplement current incomes through tourism (Belsky 1996). Through research conducted at Gales Point, Jill Belsky (1996) discovered that the development of ecotourism provided additional income to participating households and increased the awareness of conservation areas, however the project has failed to meet the initial objectives and the promise of sustainability. Belsky based her conclusion on three trends: (1) ecotourism income was sporadic and limited to families who were currently employed in other sectors of the local economy; (2) community management institutions were controlled by locally affluent family groups and aligned with specific national political parties; (3) shifts in the national political economic context

"exacerbate all of the above and any real link between conservation and development" (Belsky 1996). Belsky's conclusions bring to the fore the permeation of structural inequalities and the interconnectedness between global, national, and local levels, thus it is imperative for Belize to address structural inequalities through enforced governmental policies focused on sustainable development.

Last, the development of the Toledo Ecotourism Association in southern Belize provides an example of ecotourism development based at grassroots organization (Wheat 1994:19). The Toledo Ecotourism Association has organized ecotours emphasizing the preservation of ancient Maya culture and environmental conservation. The settlements where the ecotourists stay were built by locals, using local material, and supervised by local inhabitants, thus ensuring that tourist receipts remain in the community. In the community, ecotourism is considered within the context of developing other sectors of their economy, and they have begun to develop a firm agricultural base, exporting cocoa to the United Kingdom for organic chocolate production. While it is too early to know the sustainability of this program, the Toledo Ecotourism Association provides a good example of combining ecotourism with other sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, construction, and social. The development of ecotourism at the grassroots level should be encouraged by national and governmental policies, because they can lead to the reduction of structural inequalities.

### **Local Participation**

The previous discussion brings to the fore the importance of local participation in the success of sustainable development projects, therefore

sustainable tourism and ecotourism. By concentrating on local level sustainable development, developing nations such as Belize can reevaluate national policies and create policies that work at the 'grassroots' level, thus addressing unsustainable practices at the source. Focusing on sustainable development at the local level does not discount the importance of macro level activities in developing sustainable practices (Ghai and Vivian 1992:1). However, it is intended to provide a more sustainable alternative to current development strategies that stress the role of foreign investment and increased export production. The role of local participation, in the success of sustainable development projects, emphasizes the need to provide positive incentives for local environmental conservation as well as benefiting social and economic variables within the local community. Current resource management policies need to integrate the role of external agencies and local knowledge to create successful sustainable development programs. Michael Redclift aptly identifies this problem:

Rural people are unlikely to perceive the problems which face them in everyday life as 'environmental problems'. Nevertheless the 'answers' arrived at by the state, and other outside institutions, make assumptions about what is beneficial for people, and ways in which the environment can be more effectively used (Blauert 1990). In fact, the approaches of outside agencies frequently address the problems of the agencies themselves, rather than the those of the rural poor or their environments. To most poor people in rural areas, for whom daily contact with the environment is taken for granted, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the management of production from the management of the environment, and both from part of the livelihood strategy of the household or group. (Redclift 1992:36).

Redclift's observations identify the need to recognize traditional perceptions and management systems with the actions of external agencies. If local

perceptions of sustainable development projects are positive, socially, political economically, or environmentally, the project has a stronger rate of survival, however negative perceptions can lead to the project's downfall. Recognizing traditional management practices and assessing the current and future conditions, therefore aids in the management process to ensure either sustainable practices endure or at least to integrate beneficial ideas into different social, economic and environmental contexts (Vivian 1992:54). It is important to understand that traditional management practices are not static, but constantly changing, thus can range from several years old to centuries of practice (Vivian 1992:56). These changes, especially for developing nations, include the exogenous pressures, national policy decisions, the influence of world market economies, and increased contact with Western ideologies (Vivian 1992:63). Jessica Vivian (1992:57-58) proposes that some traditional forms of sustainability are manifested in social and cultural contexts.

Indirectly, Vivian's remarks, as well as Redclift's, advocate the increased role of anthropology in the understanding and implementation of sustainable development projects. Anthropology is not limited to discerning the social context of a research problem, and by understanding the historical and contemporary context of the interactions between social, political economic, and environmental concerns, a sustainable form of development is approached. In the context of sustainable tourism, the importance of local participation cannot be ignored. Both Redclift and Vivian demonstrate the importance of integrating local participation the sustainable development projects, thus to create a sustainable tourism project local participation should be paramount.

## Synthesis

While alternative models for developing sustainable tourism programs exist, (Drake 1991; Horwich 1990), a community based, biosphere reserve model offers an opportunity to integrate traditional management strategies with external policies, while placing tourism in a broader context. The biosphere reserve model stresses the conservation of ecosystems through a multiple-use approach (von Droste zu Hulshoff and Gregg 1985:2). There are four key areas identified; Core Areas, Experimental Areas, Rehabilitation Areas, and Traditional Use Areas. Ideally these designated areas are defined by the following (von Droste zu Hulshoff and Gregg 1985:1-3):

**Core Area:** a primitive wilderness, strictly protected and maintained free of human disruption to conserve a representative example of the ecosystems of one of the world's major regions.

**Experimental Areas:** provide sites for manipulative research to improve our understanding of the effects of natural and human influences, as well as research and demonstration projects to develop and communicate improved resource management methods suited to the capabilities of local people and available technical and financial resources.

**Rehabilitation Areas:** accommodate research, demonstration and training to restore ecosystems to approximate the pre-disturbance conditions or to restore sustainable economic productivity in areas degraded by human uses or, less often, damaged by storms or other natural events.

**Traditional Use Areas:** provide for the study of subsistence activities and harmonious patterns of land use by indigenous people, and for the judicious modification or supplementation of these practices using methods which respect and build upon their cultural traditions.

These areas are designated through the cooperation between the local population, national administrators, and development agencies. Ultimately,

the focus of the entire project, from the onset, remains on the benefits to the local populations. Biosphere reserves attempt to solve interrelated environmental, land use, and socio-economic based on the acquired information and cooperation (von Droste zu Hulshoff and Gregg 1985:3). While the sustainability of the project will be determined by the cooperation between the local populations, national government, and the development organizations, the biosphere reserve model addresses the negative consequences of sustainable development. (von Droste zu Hulshoff and Gregg 1985).

The biosphere reserve model can integrate successfully traditional management practices with external policies in order to develop sustainable projects. By focusing on this cooperative integration, the biosphere reserve model aligns itself with the principles of sustainable development. The biosphere reserve model demonstrates sustainable development on a larger context; thus one industry is not required to provide the expected benefits to the local community, therefore integrating the local social, economic, and environmental contexts and leading to self-sustainability. The biosphere reserve model attempts to benefit the whole community, not just local elites. Projects and changes are monitored continually, giving the management team and the community the flexibility to identify unsustainable elements and take appropriate actions. Projects, such as ecotourism, can be added to biosphere reserves, adding to the economic, ecological, and social diversity.

Manu National Park and Biosphere Reserve (Manu) provides a successful example of how ecotourism fits into social, economic, and environmental interactions. Located in the tropical rainforests of southern Peru, Manu protects 7,000 square miles of the Amazon. The protected area



contains vast amounts of ecological diversity, including 13 distinct ecosystems ranging from the 1,200 feet above sea level lowland forests to 14,000 feet of the Andes Mountains and abundant endangered species (Janson 1994). Protecting the ecological diversity and variety of endangered species was the impetus for creating the reserve, however the use of the biosphere reserve model has protected much more. The general holdings of the biosphere reserve include a core area of nearly 6,000 square miles which is barred from all economic and touristic activities; a buffer zone or experimental area of over 965 square miles designed to protect while allowing limited tourism and scientific research; and approximately, 350 square miles is designated as the traditional use area, allowing small scale farming, hunting, and other traditional use patterns (Serra-Vega, 1991:76).

The ecotourism industry, not established until the 1990's, was developed through the cooperation of the local populations, national, and external activities. For example, there are six companies operating 20 small scale lodges, all are wholly or partly owned and operated by local residents, including native born (Munn 1994:82). Many of the lodges have been built sustainably by using local resources and local infrastructures. For examples, a former tea plantation was converted into the Amazonia Lodge; and the Manu Lodge, which has no electricity, was built using wood scavenged from mahogany snags along the riverbanks (Linden 1991:81). By using sustainable practices, Manu National Park and Biosphere Reserve has avoided many of the negative consequences of ecotourism and has integrated social, economic, and environmental concerns for the benefit of local populations. Thus the success and sustainability of the reserve requires continued cooperation, monitoring, and appropriate management actions. Manu establishes that by

strictly following the doctrine of sustainable development and by using the biosphere reserve model, ecotourism can provide benefits to the political economic, social, and environmental interactions of developing regions.

## Endnotes for Chapter 5:

<sup>1</sup> The book entitled *Humans as Components of Ecosystems* provides an interdisciplinary survey of research viewing an ecosystem oriented approach. (McDonnell and Pickett 1993). Another book dealing with these interrelationships specifically through anthropology is *The Ecosystem Approach in Anthropology: From Concepts to Practice*. (Moran 1990)

<sup>2</sup> For example, Gary Machlis et. al. (1995), identifies a human ecosystem as "a coherent system of biophysical and social factors capable of adaptation and sustainability over time" (Machlis et. al. 1995:6). Machlis et. al. identifies three critical resources: natural, socio-economic, and cultural that are regulated by the social system. While Machlis et. al. emphasizes the social system, they maintain an understanding of the other integral aspects of the overall human ecosystem.

<sup>3</sup> Current debates in world system theory revolve around the issue of whether or not there is a continuity in world history systems before the advent of capitalism. Continuity theorists argue that structural inequalities and underdevelopment occurred before capitalism, thus a holistic understanding of the world system needs to extend deeper into history. On the other hand, discontinuity theorists reject holism and stress that there is a distinct separation between the capitalist world system and previous systems, thus understand the world system specifically in the context of capitalism. (See Frank and Gills 1993 for further debates concerning current world system theories).

<sup>4</sup> Burr 1995 provides an excellent summary of several approaches to attain sustainable development, including Barbier 1987, Court 1990, Holmberg and Sandbrook 1992 and Milbrath 1989. Other researchers considering the interactions between social, economic, and environmental systems include the following: "Human Ecosystem as an Organizing Concept in Ecosystem Management," Machlis et. al., 1995; cultural/ideological/ethical, ecological/economic, and political systems, Frank and Gills, 1993; and anthropology and the ecosystem, Moran, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Frank and Gills (1993:39) aver that development policy, generally controlled by developed nations, has created profits and enrichment for the controlling agencies and countries, with complete disregard for the countries in need.

<sup>6</sup> Culture building requires the creation of new symbols of nationalism, such as food, dress, music, and language, that create a shared sense of unity, therefore reducing the demands on imported goods and increasing local consumption (Wilk 1990).

<sup>7</sup> The 1996 Europa lists that 40 percent of Belize's land is suitable for agriculture, of which only 4.6 percent was used for agriculture in 1993. On the contrary, King et. al., 1993, classified Belize's land five agricultural productive categories, suggesting that large portions of the land suitable for agriculture is currently being used. The following was determined: 4 percent of agriculture lands were considered as having high to very high income potential suitable for cash crops; 12 percent was considered to have good productive suitable for sugar, but not citrus; 20 percent could possibly have moderate potential, has poor drainage, compact and shallow soils and would require good management; another 20 percent has only marginal chance of productivity even with skilled management techniques; and last 44 percent of the land have an extremely small chance of success, considering the limestone karst topography and slopes of the Maya Mountains.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Moberg (1991) specifies that current market policies hinder food self-sufficiency in Belize.

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<sup>9</sup> Currently, Belize's main trading partners are the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Mexico accounting for 72 percent of all import trade and 91 percent of all export trade (Europa 1996:565).

<sup>10</sup> Palacio and McCool's research was conducted from January through May 1993 at the Belize International Airport. The research consisted of a survey of 206 individuals and was intended to identify the motivations of traveling to Belize and the importance of marketing tourism.

## Chapter 6

### **Conclusions and Anthropological Praxis**

In the past decade, tourism has grown to become the world's largest industry, however the benefits of this growing phenomena tend to favor developed nations. Economically, the tourism industry is dominated by transnational corporations and developed nations, as a result, alternative forms of tourism have been created to benefit developing nations and local populations. Unfortunately, many of these alternative forms of tourism continue the dominance of developed nations. While tourism to developing nations is growing, structural inequalities limit the perceived and real benefits of tourism. Many of these structural inequalities are rooted in the historical process and context of development, therefore limiting the expected gains from tourism developments. In developing nations, these structural inequalities are complicated by the need for foreign investments to develop and build an infrastructural base for tourism.

Developing nations, hoping to take advantage of tourism's global popularity, want to find a method of tourism that will provide economic gains without suffering from the known negative consequences of tourism. Since ecotourism promises to alleviate the negative consequences of tourism, many developing nations are promoting their natural resources and exotic locations to attract ecotourists. Ecotourism is not immune to the negative consequences of tourism or current structural inequalities. Part of the problem stems from the use of the term ecotourism. While the doctrine of ecotourism emphasizes sustainable development through environmental

conservation and culturally sensitive tours, many developing nations are using the concept of ecotourism to promote their entire tourism industry, even mass tourism. As a result, ecotourism fails to meet the principles of sustainable development.

As shown in the case study of Belize, structural inequalities place constraints on the political economic process in developing nations, creating a problematic feature of any sustainable development activity. Thus it is important for developing nations to address structural inequalities, before the development of ecotourism, otherwise ecotourism can add to these inequities. The recommendations provided in the previous chapter attempt to address structural inequalities on a global, national, and local level. For developing nations, national and local levels should be the focus of policies, since structural inequalities prevent many developing nations from influencing the global political economic context. On the other hand, national and local policies, if enforced, can directly effect the process of sustainable development.

In order to link sustainable development, tourism, and governmental policies, research needs to be conducted to identify the problems limiting the success of development activities. Discerning the problems associated with sustainable development requires a holistic and multi-theoretical perspective. By using the concept of the ecosystem, ecological anthropology, and Marx's conception of history, many of the negative consequences of sustainable development emerged. Through this multi-theoretical approach, it was determined that developing sustainable tourism requires the understanding of the interconnectedness between political economic, social, and environmental factors in a historical, political economic, and ecosystematic

context. Through understanding the historical and political economic context of Belize it was determined that the processes of development created some of the structural inequalities that permeate global, national, and local levels. However, it also was recognized that other factors, such as national market policies, limit the process of sustainable development. As a result, development problems need to be understood on a contextual basis, as well as the broader context.

The ecosystem perspective added the framework in which to view the interactions between the political economic, social, and environmental systems. Through this process, several of the structural inequalities in Belize were identified, allowing recommendations to be devised to abate future problems in developing sustainable ecotourism.

By using Belize as a case study, sustainability problems could be addressed on national and local levels. It was learned that the participation of local communities is crucial to the success of sustainable development, including sustainable ecotourism. In the local and national context, it was apparent that ecotourism development can only be successful with adherence to sustainable development. Therefore ecotourism must be combined with other political economic, cultural, and environmental activities to be sustainable. With the interdependence of political economic, social, and environmental factors and the role of local participation in mind, the biosphere reserve model presented as a synthesis of sustainable development issues.

The biosphere reserve model integrates the political economic, social, and environmental interests on local as well as national and international levels. The focus of biosphere reserve models, however, is the involvement

and benefit of local populations, throughout the process of development. While the biosphere reserve model also protects vast ecosystems, the emphasis on the role of local populations suggests that the success of conservation and sustainable development rests ultimately on the integration and perceived benefits of local participants (von Droste zu Hulshoff and Gregg 1985).

The importance of local participation brings to the fore the role of anthropological theory in development issues. Anthropology provides a holistic and cultural perspective that aids in the understanding of interactional variables, such as political economic, social, and environmental factors, within an encompassing ecosystem. The dynamics of ecotourism provide an excellent opportunity for anthropologists to understand human-environmental interactions. The complex interactions involved in ecotourism projects, also, challenge the practical application of anthropological theory. Therefore anthropologists should be involved in the process of developing, evaluating, and maintaining ecotourism projects. Overall, studying ecotourism from an anthropological perspective adds to the cultural dimension, that is often overlooked.

By understanding the role of anthropology in the context of ecotourism, this research has demonstrated the need for future investigations. Many of the problems confronting sustainable development and ecotourism in Belize, are analogous to the political economic situation in other developing nations. By using the theories of ecological anthropology, the ecosystem perspective, and Marx's conception of history as tools, the factors inhibiting sustainable development in other developing nations can be discerned, providing the context in which to develop specific



recommendations to address future problems. Once these obstacles are learned, further research can benefit from comparing the results of these investigations. As research is conducted, it is important to continue monitoring the process and management of the ecotourism programs studied. By updating research, the interactions of the factors involved can be further investigated and managed.

This research perspective is not limited to the study of ecotourism and sustainable development. The theoretical tools used can benefit general theories of development as well as issues concerning the interactions between constantly changing systems. The flexibility of the ecosystem perspective allows researchers to identify the specific factors involved in the context of their investigation, without losing site of the broader perspective.

In summary, Muriel Crespi and Adolph Greenberg (1987:25) assert that anthropologists need "to make a concerted effort, via new lines of investigation [*viewing humans as components of the ecosystem*] and collaboration, to join conservationists, environmental planners, and traditional resource users in the development of protected resources" (italics - interpretation). The protection of natural resources and the ideas of sustainable development require a multi-discipline and multi-theoretical perspective; therefore anthropological theory needs to be a part of this process.

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