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Martha Honey (United States):

“ I see Ecotourism, whose origins trace back to the environmental movement in the 1970s, as today a far wider and deeper concept -encompassing more countries and having more dimensions than in the past” [\(p.2\)](#)



Graham Miller (United Kingdom Africa):

“ I don't believe that mass tourism can be sustainable, but then I don't believe that any form of tourism can be truly sustainable.” [\(p.6\)](#)

Director's Cut: On World Tourism Day 2008

Exactly a year ago, in a World Tourism Day message to our readers, I expressed the view that there was "a need for a new more potent type of Ecotourism, with political power and a clear ecological message, which would make full use of the internet and direct democracy to speed up change in tourism, environment and the world at large". As the world has kept getting warmer, in terms of strife, temperature and financial crisis and after listening to the 1st US presidential debate last night where the two candidates were competing on who loved nuclear energy and offshore drilling more than the other one, and where the green candidate was once more not allowed to take part, I reiterate last year's message word by word.

As charity begins at home, this past year I have been dedicating my free time to our local green party here in Greece, the Ecologists-Greens, serving as their tourism workgroup coordinator, appearing on radio and TV, speaking in public squares and auditoriums, writing articles and coordinating events. Not so as to become a professional politician, I like my current job, but to walk the walk, to be able to work directly for ecological change in Tourism, in a small country that is overflowing with millions of tourists every summer and faces many environmental and social problems, both caused by, and affecting tourism.

It's not easy, and it is probably dangerous, when you have to confront powerful developer interests, it shuts doors when others perceive you are not part of the pack, it is certainly time-consuming you are not a professional politician, with aides and the like (indeed it is a small, cash-strapped party and we are all volunteers and friends). But it is so much more effective and satisfying than just engaging in aphorisms, cynicism and platitudes from the comfort of a keyboard, or making shallow 'friends' in one more social network, while daydreaming about the time you will be able to escape to a remote paradise. There is no such destination, and even if there was, it the journey that matters.

Your journey starts right where you are! If you also want to change the world, as many of those who find their way to our website do, change yourself, get active, get political, get out there! Don't just settle for an (increasingly conventional) career in the 'segment' of 'responsible travel in natural areas'. Be an active member of the global green movement and the movement for Ecological Tourism, help make Tourism and living in general as ecological and humane as possible, for as many as you can, where you work and visit. And yes you can!

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THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

Martha Honey

Co-Director, Center on Ecotourism & Sustainable Development (CESD)

"I see Ecotourism, whose origins trace back to the environmental movement in the 1970s, as today a far wider and deeper concept - encompassing more countries and having more dimensions than in the past"

Martha Honey, co-founder and Co-Director of the Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD), heads the Washington, DC office. She has written and lectured widely on ecotourism, travelers' philanthropy, and certification issues. Her books include *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Island Press, 1999 and 2008) and *Ecotourism and Certification: Setting Standards in Practice* (Island Press, 2002). She worked for 20 years as a journalist based in Tanzania, East Africa and Costa Rica, Central America. She holds a Ph.D. in African history from the University of Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania. Martha Honey was Executive Director of The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) from 2003 to 2006.



The Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD), founded in 2003, is a non-profit, multi-disciplinary research institute devoted to eco- and sustainable tourism. The only one of its kind in the United States, the institute operates out of bi-coastal offices in Washington DC and at Stanford University, and partners with agencies and institutes around the world to monitor, evaluate and improve sustainable tourism practices and principles. Its policy oriented research leverages tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation. CESD's areas of focus include "green" certification; travelers' philanthropy; indigenous rights; transportation, climate change and carbon offsets; impacts of cruise tourism and resort and residential tourism; and research on market trends in the tourism industry and related areas.

The Interview follows:



ECOCLUB.com: *As the former head of The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), how satisfied are you about the progress of Ecotourism as a global phenomenon between Quebec 2002 and Oslo 2007, and what is your vision for the future? Do you see Ecotourism also playing a meaningful part in the political ecology/ green movement (with which it seems to share a taste for the environment, human rights, pacifism and multilateralism), or do you see it merely remaining a trendy holiday/lifestyle option for the mainstream?*

Martha Honey: In general, I remain positive about the progress and direction of ecotourism. I see ecotourism, whose origins trace back to the environmental movement in the 1970s, as today a far wider and deeper concept -encompassing more countries and having more dimensions than in the past. For me, the UN's 2002 International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) signalled that ecotourism had grown from a good idea into a global movement. The UN recognized that in countries around the world, ecotourism was being put forward as a cleaner, greener alternative to both extractive industries (logging, mining, commercial agriculture) and to mass or conventional tourism.

There were, however, strong concerns voiced during IYE about the benefits of ecotourism to local communities and particularly indigenous peoples. We can think of ecotourism as having three primary principles: it should 1) benefit conservation, 2) respect basic rights and benefit host communities, and 3) be educational as well as enjoyable for the traveller.

On the first, ecotourism has brought increased resources to protected areas and an emergence of 'green' architecture that is lighter on the land. One the third, we have seen, for instance, the emergence of the importance of good naturalist and cultural guides in interpretation and enhancement of the visitor experience. However, the second principle – ecotourism and host communities - that is both the most difficult part of the ecotourism equation and where, I feel, we have done least well.

In the years between the 2002 IYE and the 2007 Oslo global ecotourism summit we saw ecotourism grow in a number of ways. Just to name a few: certification, travelers' philanthropy, and new variants of ecotourism. During these five years, certification moved squarely onto the agenda, with the proliferation of 80-odd certification programs that measure the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism businesses. Led by the Rainforest Alliance and backed by several UN

agencies, we are now close to the launch of the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC), a global accreditation body that will “certify” these certification programs against common standards. This is a big step forward.

Travelers’ philanthropy – or the flow of development assistance from tourism businesses and travellers to host communities and conservation – has also increased. And we’ve seen the emergence of a number of variants of ecotourism, all with slightly different emphases. There is, for instance, geotourism that emphasizes the entire destination rather than individual businesses, pro-poor tourism to bring benefits to local communities, and agri-tourism that seeks to protect and strengthen family-owned farms and rural lifestyles. One of the most exciting variants is sustainable tourism which is applying the principles and good practices of ecotourism to larger, more mainstream tourism businesses such as beach resorts, city and chain hotels, airlines, and cruise ships.

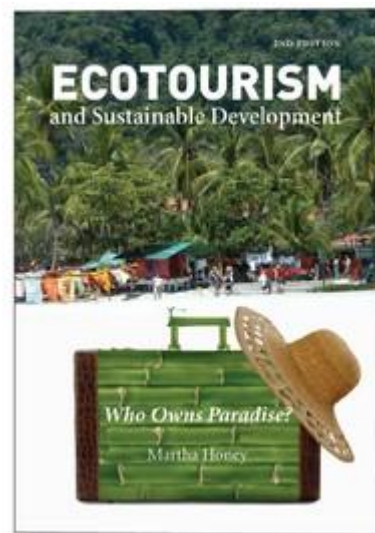
Ultimately, of course, the goal is that entire tourism industry follow the sound principles of environmental and social sustainability that have been honed and ground tested through ecotourism. Clearly we have a long, long ways to go and there are many challenges to achieving this goal. One of the ongoing tensions within the field of ecotourism over whether, as you say in your question, it is a political ecology movement or simply a lifestyle trend. Clearly, I believe it is the former. I see ecotourism as inherently a ‘revolutionary’ concept that, properly done, holds out the possibility of transforming the way the travel industry operates and the way we travel. Ecotourism is, I believe, a part of efforts to build healthier, happier, more equitable, just and peaceful societies.



ECOCLUB.com: In recent years you are developing and steering the concept of "Travelers’ Philanthropy". For many, philanthropy is elitist and reminiscent of late 19th century and early 20th century, rather ruthless industrialists. What is 21st century philanthropy with reference to travel, and in what way is it different, progressive and for the majority of travellers?

Martha Honey: I believe that the concept of travelers’ philanthropy is integral to ecotourism – even though I agree with you that the name may be misleading. “Philanthropy” can conjure up images of 19th century mega-millionaires such as Henry Ford or Andrew Carnegie seeking atonement for ruthless or destructive activities by creating philanthropic foundations. The 21st century practice of travelers’ philanthropy is a form of ‘give back’ or development assistance from tourism businesses and individual travellers into host community and conservation projects. The first practitioners of travelers’ philanthropy were ecotourism businesses who saw real needs in the host communities and responded by providing material and financial support and expertise. Initially the owners and staff of many businesses helped to support local schools, health clinics, micro-enterprises, conservation projects, etc. Gradually, a number have begun to involve their guests in these projects, offering them opportunities to donate “time, talent or treasure” to community projects.

My organization, CESD, has had a Travelers’ Philanthropy program since 2004 which is helping to bring together under one umbrella these tourism businesses that are involved in providing assistance to projects in the host communities. We have a website (www.travelersphilanthropy.org) that, among other things, offers a way to make tax deductible donations to local projects that are featured on the site. We are also organizing the next major conference on travelers’ philanthropy. This international conference will be held December 3-5, 2008 in Arusha, Tanzania, with a special focus on Africa. We are pleased that ECOCLUB has become the first media sponsor of this conference. Our special website – www.travelersphilanthropyconference.org – has all the details.



ECOCLUB.com: You are an accomplished journalist, academic and author. In your best-selling, seminal book, "Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?" you argue that "Ecotourism should support human rights and democracy". This is of course beyond the "leave only footprints" dictum included in many guidelines. What happens however, if the local culture / people / system / government do not share the western perception of parliamentary democracy and sort the long catalogue of human rights by a different rank? How do we avoid looking like the scout who helped the old lady across the street, or worse like the priests who facilitated the demise of Amerindians?

Martha Honey: Good question. Yes, as indicated above, I think ecotourism means far more than “leave only footprints.” It is also not about advocating western perceptions of parliamentary democracy. Rather, it is about supporting the universal human rights, labour rights, indigenous rights, and democratic principles that the world community, via the United Nations, has articulated. They have also been well articulated in the UNWTO’s Code of Ethics for Tourism. These should be the guide for what are best practices for the tourism industry and for what principles should be promoted in the host countries.

***[Ecotourism & Sustainable Development, 2nd Edition, August 2008](#)** Dr. Honey revisits six nations she profiled in the first edition—the Galapagos Islands, Costa Rica, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, and South Africa—and adds a new chapter on the United States. She examines the growth of ecotourism within each country’s tourism strategy, its political system, and its changing economic policies. [More Details](#)*



ECOCLUB.com: You are also quite familiar with Africa. Watching conflict and disease increasing rather than decreasing, and the cold war over, it seems the west has decided to give up on Africa, (with new powers arriving to fill the vacuum). Until recently countries such as Kenya were seen as quite successful countries, with a strong Tourism sector. One can imagine that without Tourism, Africa would have been a lot worse. However, is it and was it ever realistic that Africa could survive on Tourism alone? Did Tourism bring about much needed social and political reforms, or did it delay them, by supporting corrupt and authoritarian structures?

Martha Honey: Tourism is important in Africa. It is the principle foreign exchange earner for 83% of developing countries and, along with oil, the top foreign exchange earner in the 40 poorest countries, most of which are in Africa. But too often tourism has mainly benefited local and foreign elite. In East Africa, for instance, there have been land grabs by powerful elites of tourism rich lands around the game parks and along the coasts. To be a tool for sustainable development, tourism needs to adhere to the social and environmental principles and good practices of ecotourism. We see some fine examples of ecotourism operations in Africa, but there needs to be much more effort, by governments, the private sector, NGOs and development agencies to plan and implement nationwide strategies for socially and environmentally responsible tourism. In addition, it is risky for countries to rely too much on tourism or any other single industry. To be healthy, vibrant and sustainable, countries need a diverse mix of economic activities.



ECOCLUB.com: It is not unheard of in Africa, for whole peoples to be evicted from ancestral areas, baptized as 'national parks', so that these can be visited by nature tourists, hunting tourists, and more importantly mining and diamond extracting companies. Should the ecotourism community become more vocal about such human rights violations? And how?

Martha Honey: Yes, definitely, the ecotourism community can play a more active role in working with local communities who were evicted from their lands to create national parks. We see some important initiatives to do in East and Southern Africa. In South Africa, the restitution movement, launched after the end of apartheid, has permitted communities to petition the government to get back their lands. The government has returned some lands with the condition that they be used for only ecotourism. There are a number of partnerships between ecotourism companies and local communities to run lodges inside or on the edge of the parks. More, of course, can be done but we do have some promising models in southern Africa. In Kenya and Tanzania, there are examples of safari companies, camps, and ranches that are working with local communities to involve them in locally owned or managed tourism projects. Some companies have worked hard to establish formal agreements with Maasai and other local communities to provide jobs and pay fees for use of their lands. And there have been some efforts by local governments to funnel a portion of the park entrance fees to social welfare and conservation projects in the surrounding communities and to train and hire more local people as park rangers and guides. A lot remains to be done, and many peoples who were evicted from their lands to create parks continue to feel they have not received fair compensation.



ECOCLUB.com: Costa Rica, and Central America at large, is considered as one of the birthplaces of Ecotourism. You have lived and worked extensively in the region and indeed authored a book "Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980's". Was the emergence and success of Ecotourism in Costa Rica an accident, or a result of its progressive, pacifist policies? And what now for Costa Rica?

Martha Honey: The rise of ecotourism in Costa Rica and elsewhere in the region began when the wars in Central America ended in the late 1980s. The most important moment was when President Oscar Arias received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. Peace is a prerequisite for successful international ecotourism. Costa Rica had, in addition, other ingredients -- the "right stuff" -- that made it possible for ecotourism to grow rapidly and to involve many local people. Costa Rica has, for instance, a fine national parks system around which ecotourism developed. It had abolished its army and nationalized the banks in the late 1940s and had pumped government funds into infrastructure, education, health, small farms, and other social welfare programs. Costa Rica has the largest middle class in the Americas, good public education through university, and a high quality national health care system. So it has a healthy, well educated, and entrepreneurial population capable of owning, managing and working in a range of ecotourism businesses and activities. This is supported by a stable, peaceful political environment, relatively well functioning and enlightened government, and close proximity to the North American market. So ecotourism wasn't an accident. Rather all these factors combined to make Costa Rica, by the mid-1990s, the leading ecotourism destination in the Americas. Indeed, over the last 20 years, Costa Rica's commitment to ecotourism and environmentalism as become as important to the national identity as the country's non-militarism.

But the picture has become more complex. There is another type of tourism rapidly growing in Costa Rica. It is coastal resort and residential tourism of large typically gated complexes with hotels, golf courses, marinas, vacation homes, and other facilities that are often owned by and catering to foreigners, particularly from the U.S. My organization, CESD, is currently involved in the first large study of tourism development along Costa Rica's Pacific coast. We are examining the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of this type of resort and residential tourism and will assess how it compares with Costa Rica's ecotourism model.

It is fair to say that there is much concern in Costa Rica about what is happening along the coasts and how to maintain the country's reputation for high quality ecotourism. The current government, which is once again led by Oscar Arias, has

launched an innovative Peace with Nature Initiative, with tourism as one of its central components. Among other aims, it seeks to make Costa Rica a carbon neutral country by 2021. All of this is hopeful, and signals a determination to try to protect Costa Rica's successful ecotourism model.



ECOCLUB.com: Should Ecotourism Certification stick to measuring environmental impact, or can it credibly incorporate socio-political criteria & beliefs?

Martha Honey: Of the 80-odd 'green' certification programs around the world today, the best ones include environmental, social and economic criteria since all three are vital for sustainable development. In Europe and the U.S, however, many of the certification programs include only environmental criteria. They do not deal with fair working conditions, benefits to surrounding communities, and other social issues. The proposed global accreditation body, the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC) will require certification programs to include certain basic criteria that measure the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental impacts.



ECOCLUB.com: Many tourism & travel conferences are little more than networking events, and a chance to engage in parallel monologues, with most speakers praising themselves and their successes. In what way will the Travelers Philanthropy Conference seek to be different, and what key discussions and decisions could be made at this gathering?

Martha Honey: Networking is only one objective of the Travelers' Philanthropy conference taking place December 3-5, 2008 in Tanzania. The conference will bring together practitioners from socially responsible tourism businesses, experts in the field of sustainable tourism and philanthropy, global, regional, and community-based organizations doing development work, the United Nations and other development agencies, philanthropic foundations, government, and the media. The workshops will facilitate discussion of the tools and capacity needed to effectively run and evaluate community projects, in order to improve the impacts and outcomes of tourism industry investments in development projects. A goal is to identify a set of best practices for Travelers' Philanthropy projects. More generally, the conference will build media and public interest in supporting worthy community and conservation projects as an important component of socially responsible travel.

The theme of the conference will be "Making Travelers' Philanthropy Work for Development, Businesses, and Conservation." As such, the conference's program will emphasize key conceptual and strategic elements of Travelers' Philanthropy which enables these initiatives, and the operators and clients who support them, to deepen their social and environmental impact in a sustainable way. Keynote speaker Wangari Maathai, the Nobel Peace Laureate from Kenya, and a diverse line-up of other speakers, presenters and panelists will address key Travelers' Philanthropy issues, especially in Africa.

These include:

- Making effective, lasting, and strategic investments in social initiatives such as public health, HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment, and education;
- Linking tourism businesses and Travelers' Philanthropy to the conservation of wildlife, biodiversity, and marine resources at the local level through financial support and economic incentives;
- Designing development projects that target the root social and institutional causes of poverty in Africa and other parts in the world, through social movements for justice, equity, and political voice;
- Addressing climate change and carbon footprint issues facing the travel industry through innovative off-setting and other Travelers' Philanthropy strategies;
- Using Travelers' Philanthropy to provide specific training and capacity building for communities, emphasizing local participation and empowerment;
- Developing and spreading tourism business models that fully incorporate ethical and sustainable tourism with Travelers' Philanthropy as a central element.

In addition to these issues, which will form the basis for the conference's sessions and panel presentations, CESD will also run a short technical seminar for businesses interested in developing Travelers' Philanthropy programs. At this "how to" seminar, CESD and representatives from companies with well developed programs will cover questions such as how to identify which community project to assist, what sorts of corporate involvement and support are appropriate, how to develop a program to involve guests and travellers, and how to set up the legal structures and oversight mechanisms. The conference will also feature the premier of the first ever video documentary on Travelers' philanthropy. The documentary, which is being filmed and edited by a team Stanford University graduate students in video production, will highlight projects from around the world, with specific emphasis on Tanzania, Kenya and Costa Rica. Finally, CESD together with leading East Africa tour operators is offering eight optional safaris before and after the conference. The tours showcase the best of Tanzania's ecotourism attractions, including its world renowned game parks (Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and Lake Manyara), Mt. Kilimanjaro, and the island of Zanzibar. They also include visits to community and conservation projects that are supported by tourism businesses - to demonstrate Travelers' Philanthropy in action.



ECOCLUB.com: Finally, what would be other ecotourism-related future plans for you or your organisation CESD?

Martha Honey: CESD is committed to high quality and cutting edge research and projects around critical issues facing the tourism industry. We are a bi-coastal institute, with offices in Washington, DC and at Stanford University (which is headed by CESD's co-director, Dr. William Durham). We began with certification and travelers' philanthropy. Over the last several years, our focus has grown beyond ecotourism to encompass the broader tourism industry. We have carried out, for instance, a number of studies of the impacts of cruise tourism on ports-of-call and destination countries. (The studies on Costa Rica, Belize and Honduras are posted on the CESD website.) We have recently completed a study of global trends in coastal tourism (also on the website) and are now doing an in-depth assessment of resort and residential tourism along Costa Rica's Pacific coast. We are also working to create and strengthen a network in the Americas of ecotourism businesses run by indigenous peoples, and we are exploring expanding this model to other geographic regions. Our major long term project is called Travel STAR (Sustainable Tourism and Reinvestment) and it involves creating a one stop shop web portal for ecotourism holidays, carbon offset, and travelers' philanthropy and marketing holiday packages to employees of socially responsible businesses and institutions in North America. CESD's portfolio of projects, some of which generate income, are all aimed, as our tagline says, at "transforming the way the world travels."



ECOCLUB.com: Thank you very much!

THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

Graham Miller

Senior Lecturer in Management, University of Surrey

"I don't believe that mass tourism can be sustainable, but then I don't believe that any form of tourism can be truly sustainable."

Dr Graham Miller is a Senior Lecturer in Management at the University of Surrey, England, where he teaches issues relating to business ethics, sustainability and the tourism industry. He has a PhD and Masters degree from the University of Surrey, UK and his undergraduate degree from the University of Salford.

Dr Miller's main research interest is in the forces that enable and prevent the drive towards a more sustainable tourism industry, publishing the first book to address the monitoring of sustainable tourism in 2005. He has just completed a major study for the UK government Department for the Environment on public awareness of sustainable tourism and leisure. Other recent clients have included the European Union, the UK Department of Trade and Industry, the Association of British Insurers, the UK National Audit Office, TUI-AG and Ipsos-Mori.

Dr Miller is also a consultant and qualified accreditation officer for the United Nations World Tourism Organisation and their Tourism Education Quality Programme, while the University of Surrey currently holds the chair of the Education Council of the UNWTO. He is a judge for the World Travel and Tourism Council's prestigious Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, which seek to establish the tourism company making the greatest contribution to sustainable tourism each year. Graham Miller sits on the editorial board of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, and is the Tourism editor of the journal Tourism and Hospitality Research. Dr Miller is vice-chair for the Research Ethics Committee of Hammersmith Hospital, and a member of the Faculty of Management Ethics Committee at the University of Surrey.



(The Interview follows:)



ECOCLUB.com: As a UNWTO accreditation officer for tourism education, how satisfied are you with the quality of tourism education around the world? Has tourism attained social science status, or is it still considered a new, soft, option in academic circles? What more needs to be done in that respect?

Graham Miller: Tourism education continues to improve and there are some fantastic examples of innovative programmes delivering good quality education to students around the world. I have seen the subject taught by some of the most enthusiastic people and this has enthused students with a desire to work in the industry and to make a positive contribution to the world. Yet, tourism undoubtedly still suffers from the image of being a purely vocational subject with little academic value. I believe it is the value of tourism research that needs to improve for the subject to gain further recognition amongst its peers. As the standard of research improves and the value of tourism research for government policy is demonstrated, so tourism will be taken more seriously as an academic subject.



ECOCLUB.com: In relation to the UK, which you know best, how satisfied are teachers and students with the content & form of tourism studies. Is it relevant and hands-on or too abstract? Are UK tourism graduates really useful for tourism companies in the UK and overseas, judging from their current employment prospects?

Graham Miller: Increasingly students are becoming focused on questioning the 'worth' of their degree. This can be assessed in a number of ways, but more and more, this is interpreted in terms of whether students can get good jobs quickly after graduation. This makes universities focus more on teaching the kinds of skills industry finds desirable. This presents a challenge to universities to deliver educational programmes that develop key intellectual skills, encourage deep lifelong learning whilst also ensuring students are able to impress an employer with the things they will be able to do. Such a situation also challenges employers to be more ready to engage with universities, to invest and co-operate in order to help produce the kinds of graduates they want. If industry does not co-operate, then the graduates will be less likely to be the kind the industry wants!



ECOCLUB.com: Is remote, on-line training & life-long learning the future for Tourism education, a discipline that after all is very applied and geographically dispersed? If so, what should Universities do so as not to miss the training train?

Graham Miller: Virtual learning has many potential positives for lifelong learning, but it risks missing the essential communication and interactivity of tutorials and seminars. Increasingly, technology can overcome many of these problems to allow remote participants to engage with a seminar. Many universities now offer remote learning versions of their programmes and for short training programmes, the remote learning environments can be very effective. As with many aspects of life, the challenge is to be able to offer the core product in as many formations as the customer finds desirable.



ECOCLUB.com: As an expert on business ethics, what is your position on the relation of academia & business. Is it ok for professors to act as consultants for companies and vice versa? Who should be entrusted to steer (through funding) academic research: the government, the 3rd sector, or the market? All of them, or should universities be self-sustained islands/oases of integrity and ethics, even at the risk of producing abstract/irrelevant research?

Graham Miller: Tough questions! I think that the more co-operation there is between academia and business the better. Universities are often keen to have industry representatives on their boards and as advisors, but there are fewer examples of companies with academic advisors. However, I do not believe that it is the job of academics to provide consultancy services for business, or to provide the answers for industry needs. If industry has a problem, then it needs to find the solution. That might be by working with a university, but it is not the job of a university to provide solutions for business. I see academic research as being equivalent to cat walk fashion designers. This is an odd comparison given the way many academics dress, but when we see the extreme fashion on display in Milan, London and New York we often think how abstract and removed those designs seem from the things we wear in our day to day lives. Yet, undoubtedly, those designs do influence the clothes that are for sale in high street shops, and thus the clothes we wear. In the same way, academics need to feel justified in thinking abstract thoughts that may have no immediate relevance, but which can influence the direction of the industry. If academia becomes too pre-occupied with trying to solve the practical problems of today, it will not be able to look at the big problems facing us tomorrow.



ECOCLUB.com: Also related to business ethics is the issue of Tourism Awards. Beyond the major, quality, award-giving bodies, of which you have first-hand experience, how satisfied are you with their overall level of transparency. Are there perhaps conflicts of interest, with judges awarding former clients / sponsors? To the experienced, cynical even, eye of the academic, how credible are all those awards?

Graham Miller: I have been a judge for the Tourism for Tomorrow awards for the last few years, and believe these awards have credibility because all the finalists are visited by people with vast experience of sustainable tourism. There is a large investment of resources into the process, and the people involved have strong personal reputations. Where the procedures are not as rigorous, then there is cause for concern. PR driven awards have their place in helping to sell magazines and perhaps even

encouraging readers to ask a few more questions about the places they travel to, or the companies they travel with. Accreditation is going to be an important area in the near future as sustainable tourism becomes more relevant to us all, but we find ourselves without the time or expertise to assess destinations and companies, so we will need to rely on external verification and accreditation bodies.



ECOCLUB.com: You are editing for various academic tourism journals. What is your evaluation of the current trend for free, electronic, open-access academic journals? Academics are not paid to write these articles, so why should readers pay? Is it a matter of upsetting cherished 'gentleman's agreements' between universities & a few publishing houses which also influence the composition of editorial boards?

Graham Miller: I would love to be paid for the material I write, but I don't see the system changing any time soon. There is a large administrative element to running a journal, and I am not keen to take on that task - hence someone needs to perform that role, and that person needs to be paid! The amount of work just necessitates the readers need to pay in order to keep the business running. There is a movement to make more content free for readers, and many journals now make content freely available after a number of years, but unless someone pays for it initially and it is left to academics to disseminate the material, there is going to be a long delay before publication!!



ECOCLUB.com: The sustainable tourism consultant dilemma: By assisting previously unsustainable mega-resort developments become (or at least look) more sustainable, sustainable tourism consultants become on the one hand part of the solution, and of the other, part of the problem, painting the Trojan horse green so that it can reach the parts it could previously not. There are plenty of examples with 'green' golf developments on arid Mediterranean (is)lands. What is your evaluation?

Graham Miller: The only way in which tourism can be a responsible industry is for mass tourism to become more sustainable. I don't believe that mass tourism can be sustainable, but then I don't believe that any form of tourism can be truly sustainable. The challenge is to do as much as we can and behave as responsibly as possible. Then, we need to hope that this is enough to keep the world turning. If not, then we are going to have to really change our behaviour and start doing different things. If we don't do different things voluntarily, then changes are going to have to be imposed either by legislation or through a market system of pricing certain activities out of our reach. Hence, it is going to be a lot easier to change our behaviour now in favour of more sustainable options.

As consumers, we need to ask more searching questions of the places we visit. If we are golfers, then we need to recognise that our hobby can have a large impact on the local environment, ask questions about the places we go and try to avoid those courses with the wildest claims. The market will punish those businesses that are least sustainable, but we need more information in order to be able to make the right decision. Journalists have a role to play here in investigating what is actually happening at destinations and exposing those that make the most unfounded claims.



ECOCLUB.com: There is criticism that academics, but also businesses, have a tendency to create niches, so as to monopolise them and excel in them. Does the constant creation of tourism niches obstruct and fragment quality academic discourse and research, or is it a natural path of competition and evolution?

Graham Miller: Tourism is a new subject, so we are exploring all its facets and features. I don't think that anyone really studies golf tourism for example, without seeing the whole picture of tourism as part of leisure. If we look at academic disciplines like medicine and law, researchers will study the most minute aspect of their discipline for their entire careers, so I don't think that the identification of small niche areas of study is a problem for tourism. What is a problem is the relatively small number of tourism researchers and large number of tourism journals means getting published is perhaps too easy now, which has led to the risk of a reduction in quality of papers being published. There are several key journals which have really been at the forefront of attempts to drive up the quality of tourism research, but the increasing numbers of tourism journals is creating a quality problem.



ECOCLUB.com: Especially in the UK, there appears to be a growing hostility against airline companies (and airports), and their role in greenhouse gas emissions. Some feel this is justified (forgetting of course to blame the heavily subsidised aircraft manufacturers oligopoly), others suspect it is a ruse for assisting well-meaning travellers to part with their money through unregulated click and offset schemes. In the light of air disasters and arduous flight connections, it has been argued that instead of being penalised, the world and especially parts thereof like Africa actually needs a network of subsidised, safe air routes, that could support greater tourism & trade. What is your view?

Graham Miller: A very difficult question to answer, and one that I do not have an answer for. Certainly the world benefits from a tourism industry. 80% of the world's poorest 50 countries have tourism as their chief income earner, yet these very same countries are least equipped to deal with the effects of climate change, with aviation as a significant contributor to climate change. I do believe that in the future we will look back on this period of history and be amazed at the amount people travel. I feel an increase in domestic tourism would be a positive development and a re-focusing of our vision on local opportunities. Of

course, this would mean many of the poorest countries would be denied a chief source of income, threatening the reasons cultures and environments are preserved at the moment, and this would need to be addressed through development income, although this is not satisfactory. However, the risk of continuing this incredible expansion of aviation seems to be too great.



ECOCLUB.com: Despite all the pro-environment rhetoric most tourism administrations carry on with maximising travellers numbers and revenue, constantly comparing themselves to the Jones's, neighbouring and distant 'competing destinations'. In your teaching and research you have covered many countries. Which of these countries or destinations, has (or have) in your view developed a tourism model that approaches sustainability ideals, and which was its key to success?

Graham Miller: I am impressed by the work Australia and New Zealand are doing at present. They have recognised that in a resource constrained world there could be a lot fewer tourists to their part of the world and so they have to derive as much of the current benefits from tourism as possible from fewer tourists. This will make them assess actually which groups of tourists are most beneficial to the country. Is it the backpackers, the package tourists, the retirees? As ever with necessity, it will be the mother of invention and we will see the best answers emerging from those places with the most pressing need to find the answers.



ECOCLUB.com: You have just completed a major study for public views & perceptions of sustainable tourism and leisure in the UK. So, please tell us, should someone be doing a better job, and who?

Graham Miller: As I said above, we should all be doing a better job. Consumers need to ask more questions, industry needs to find more solutions, governments need to show more leadership and investment in solutions, academia needs to be more creative, NGOs and journalists need to be more investigative and keep the pressure on.



ECOCLUB.com: Thank you very much for your time; one last question - you are young, however already very accomplished on many levels. What are your future aspirations? Do you believe politics is the answer for someone who wants to bring about change in Tourism, or can everyone (academics, practitioners, travellers) play a key part?

Graham Miller: I derive huge pleasure from teaching and I also enjoy the investment the university is prepared to make in my development in order to help me to be a better teacher and researcher. This is a privileged position, but I do believe that unless we have people thinking about big problems, then the day to day nature of business means that we are going to miss the really important things. The challenge for academia is to make sure business and government is listening when we do have something important to say. Tourism faces a political challenge in that some bits of government want it to expand in order to develop the economy, others want it to contract to protect the environment, while other bits still want it to shift overseas in order to help with international development. However, this reflects the complexities of life, there are no single or simple answers - and that is what makes my job interesting!



ECOCLUB.com: Thank you very much!

ECO FOCUS

Tourism Planning & Development in Tibet

by [Trevor Sofield](#)

Foundation Professor of Tourism, University of Tasmania, Australia

(Summary - download the complete report: [Part 1](#) - [Part 2](#) - [Part 3](#))



Annual installation ceremony for graduation of new monks, Qiangabling Monastery, Chamdo



In June/July 2008 I made my ninth visit in 8 years to Greater Tibet and the Tibet Autonomous Region (T.A.R.). Each visit has been a research planning exercise designed to gather data and undertake analyses for the development of appropriate forms of ecotourism and cultural tourism for Chinese (domestic) and International visitation. Previous outcomes have included a tourism master plan for the 'Greater Shangri-la Region' (which encompasses the Tibetan communities of northern Yunnan Province, western Sichuan Province and Eastern Tibet), and various tourism plans for Tibet itself. At the highest political level, a major commitment, supported by more than US\$20 billion, has been made for the economic development of China's western provinces (the Western Development Plan) because of their relative under-development compared to the booming eastern coastal provinces. Tibet and Tibetans are beneficiaries of this national intervention. The objective on the occasion of my most recent visit was to develop a tourism master plan for the Lin Zhi Prefecture and four counties in the south east of Tibet Autonomous Region as part of a team from Sun Yat Sen University Centre for Tourism Planning and Research, Guangzhou. This area of Tibet, which abuts Myanmar and India to the south, is in a part of Tibet not yet opened to international tourism and non-Chinese (as with several other areas of my field trips), and approval for access was based on the need for professional tourism planning. I have thus had the privilege of visiting

many places not on the tourist map and I have had access to all kinds of people at all levels of society and government, from governors and party secretaries of counties to senior officials and many ordinary Tibetan people, from Lhasa (the capital) to major towns to small villages and tiny hamlets.

Objectives: A major component of the most recent exercise was to focus on Tibetan ecology and culture to advise on appropriate forms of development that would safeguard and retain the integrity of Tibetan traditions to the greatest possible extent for international visitors and Chinese alike. The Master Plan

is being formulated under the auspices of the China National Tourism Administration, a key aim of which is to promote Tibetan culture. In this context, as with all previous field trips, I found a resilient, dynamic living culture being expressed and manifest on a daily basis in literally hundreds of different ways. The total integration between Tibetan culture and their biophysical environment thus lends itself to holistic forms of ecotourism development that have the capacity to benefit local communities directly.



Yang Zhou Yong village



Ba-rang Village

Touring route development The scenery in south eastern Tibet is stunning. When the area is opened to international visitors the route we took will I believe become one of the most spectacular touring routes anywhere - towering snow capped peaks adorned with numerous glaciers, deep perpendicular gorges, thick old-growth forests in the lower altitudes, windswept grasslands on the plateau, picturesque villages occupying tiny fragments of arable land among the peaks and gorges, and a vibrant culture all around!

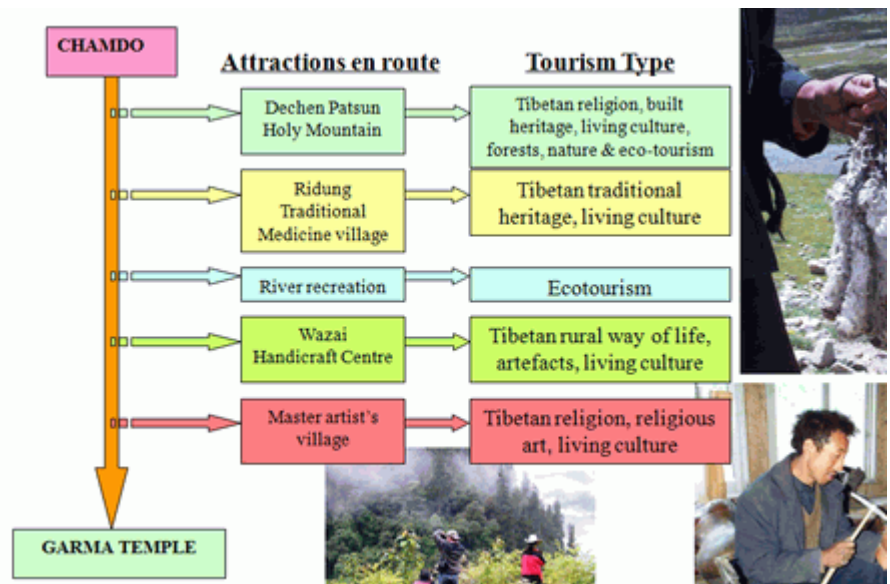
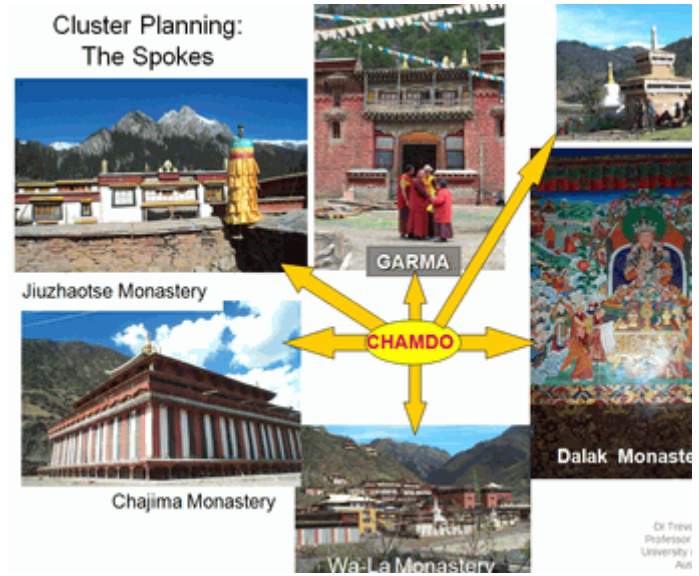
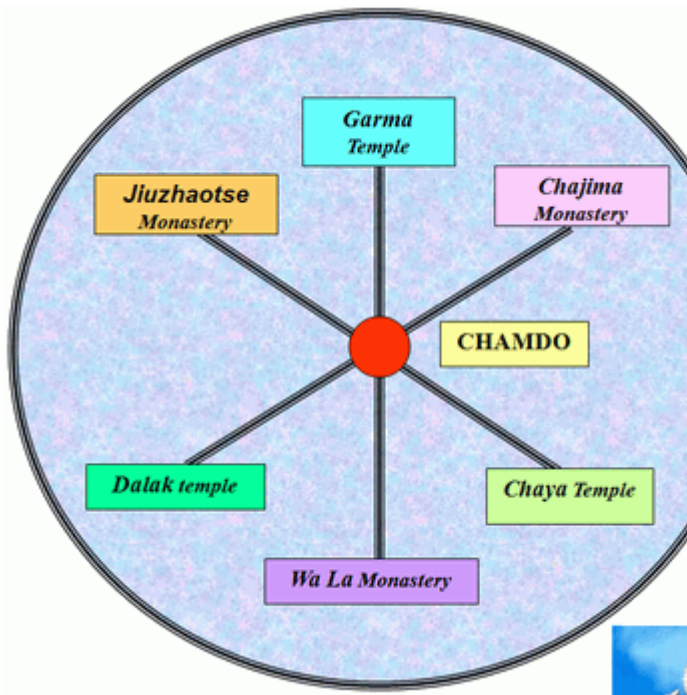


Yarlung Tsampo (Brahmaputra) River



Silong Glacier

I have witnessed, on a daily basis, literally hundreds of religious acts and aspects of Tibetan culture in all its forms and variety. I have spent weeks at a time immersed in an extremely vibrant and dynamic culture that is Tibetan first, Tibetan second and Tibetan last. I have spent many hours in more than 100 monasteries and temples where monks, nuns and pilgrims have practised their beliefs and carried out their religious activities without hindrance. The development plan submitted for the pilgrimage town of Chamdo in central eastern Tibet, home of perhaps the most famous Yellow Hat sect Buddhist teaching monastery in Tibet with currently more than 2000 resident monks, Qianbaling, provides such an example. Chamdo is surrounded by eight ancient monasteries and temples located high up in the surrounding mountains, each one at the end of a road that radiates out from Chamdo like the spoke of a wheel. Each temple requires a full day in 4WD vehicle to reach and return to Chamdo. This configuration lends itself to a classical hub-and-spokes cluster development and the concept incorporated in our Tourism Development Plan utilises the Tibetan prayer wheel or circle of life to emphasize the cultural richness of the experience. Each day trip to the ancient temple at the end of the road combines a range of nature based experiences that focus on a village or villages en route so that ecotourism in its holistic form constitutes the foundation of our planning. For example, the trip to the 8th century Garma Temple passes the village of Ridung, famous for traditional Tibetan herbal medicines where there is a thriving cottage industry; Wami, a craft village famous for its metal workers who make Buddhist idols and other statuary for temples all over Tibet; and Wazai which hosts families of 'thanka' artists who specialize in producing traditional paintings and art works for temples and monasteries. The village of Dorje is located above a fast flowing stream ideal for kayaking and rafting, and there are many potential wilderness walks into the mountains along the entire route to Garma on yak or pony (or on foot) with local guides and home-stays, including a high alpine forest of rhododendrons and conifers that are home to at least one large troop (more than 250 members) of long tailed Tibetan macaques.



Each of the Chamdo 'spokes' could be developed over a period of time as an en route attraction, as exemplified by the route to Garma Temple:

Diagram showing the hub-and-spokes relationship of Chamdo to the surrounding temples. There is no linking road between any of the temples which are separated by very high mountains, deep valleys and swift flowing rivers.

Pilgrimage: Among many other examples of cultural diversity visible all over Tibet are the hundreds, perhaps thousands of pilgrims on trails and roads all over Tibet slowly and arduously making their way to Lhasa, prostrating themselves full length on the ground, rising, taking three paces forward, and lowering themselves to the ground again to stretch out to the full, an action repeated thousands and thousands of times, on journeys that may take two or more years. We came across one group of pilgrims who had been on the road from Chengdu, Sichuan (where the recent earthquake was) for 2 years, a baby had been born on the way - and they had an Australian budgerigar in a cage!!!! (Of which I have a photo of course!). Another old couple - both in their 60s - let me pull their handcart up and over a pass at 4,884 metres! (I was interested to see how heavy it was). Another family group had two or three family members at a time prostrating themselves along the road for 2-to-3 kilometres and then being replaced by others relay-team style. Their hand cart was adorned with solar cells and a battery - there is no firewood at high altitudes of course, often no yak or cattle dung as an alternate fuel, and so to boil the water for their yak butter tea, they had an electric kettle! The hand carts contain a tent, spare clothing, a few pots and pans and not much else. To protect their hands and chests from abrasions as they prostrate themselves full length on the ground they wear wooden pads strapped to the palms of their hands and a heavy yak leather apron.



Pilgrims use wooden pads and a heavy yak leather apron



Pilgrims on Mt Meli pass - 4,884 m.

In terms of the integration of culture and environment, mountains in all forms of Tibetan Buddhism are sacred, every high mountain pass in Tibet is regarded as sacred, and every pass is adorned with literally thousands of Buddhist prayer flags and silk scarves. Buddhist belief is that as each flag flutters in the breeze the prayer that is printed on it drifts on the wind and blesses all those who feel the movement of the air. The latter, hadah, are exchanged in welcome ceremonies and in numerous other Buddhist rituals as a symbol of peace and good wishes), with every Tibetan traveller stopping to add more flags and scarves – and nowadays, busloads of Chinese and other travellers engaging in the same action. In some places the fabric is metres thick. Evidence from the metres-thick piles of torn and faded flags and hadah as well as brand new ones indicate that the practice has been continuing for a long time. In addition to prayer flags, piles of inscribed mani stones and tablets, far more numerous than the many thousands of temples, dot roadsides, hillsides, riversides and other sites imbued with a spiritual essence and are constantly added to, repainted and/or reinscribed. Often the skulls of yaks are also inscribed with a Buddhist mantra and added to a pile of mani stones.



Every mountain is sacred & every pass is adorned with prayer flags



Sacred mani stones. Some are new, many of hundreds of years old.

A living culture: I have seen Tibetans going about their daily life ploughing their fields with yaks while chanting the ubiquitous “Om-ma-ni-pad-ma-ni-om” as a prayer of forgiveness because every turn of their plough is killing animals and insects in the soil in violation of the Buddhist precept of never taking life in any form. Of women climbing cliff faces to place prayer flags and juniper twigs in ‘worship power places’. Of families tending their herds of yaks, goats, sheep, donkeys and horses, milking them, weaving their wool, making yak butter, harvesting barley in the lower valleys, making leather pouches, carving wooden saddles – not actors museumized for tourists in traditional fancy dress, not Sinicized to destroy their culture, just living as Tibetans have lived for centuries – but sometimes with electricity from micro-hydro schemes to light and warm their homes!



China experiences four major tourist flows, each of which has significantly different characteristics that planning must take into account. The needs and expectations of Chinese domestic tourists (by far the largest market) are quite different from those of ‘Overseas Chinese’, which in turn are different from international Asian visitors (Japan, Korea, Thailand, etc), which are again quite different from those of international western country travellers. My focus as part of the team was to contribute to proposals for the international western countries’ segment of the market, particularly ecotourism and cultural tourism. A major characteristic of this market is that Tibet has an almost mystical fascination for westerners, and tours need to be undertaken with interpretation that covers history, religion, biology, geology and culture. Given the relative isolation of Tibet, its underdeveloped tourism services sector and the reliance of access to many parts by four-wheel drive vehicles on precipitous roads over passes more than 5000 metres high, the type of tourism might be appropriately described as cultural/natural heritage adventure tourism.

One of our proposals for a form of ecotourism activity new to Tibet is based on a traditional form of transport – their use of ropes and pulleys to transport goods and people across the deep narrow gorges of rivers and streams. For example, since 700A.D. the cha-ma-trail (tea-horse trail) which runs for 2,500 kms from Lijiang in northern Yunnan Province to Lhasa has used ropes and pulleys to transport tea across the Yangtze and Mekong River gorges en route to Lhasa, with horses being transported across the rivers on the return journey. This proposal builds on that tradition to introduce a new way of ‘travelling’ through a forest - a high wire harness ride through the treetops. Locations for such an adventure ride could be the Tsebak Valley National Nature Preserve near Dyazul, the Mel-dway Glacier, and the Five Cultures Villages. Such a development would be innovative (in terms of tourism), active, culturally derived and environmentally sensitive.



Diagram illustrating how the cable harness ride could provide an exciting access for adventurous tourists to the Five Cultures Villages. Instead of just driving along the road, they could stop at the top of the hill, and slide down the cable across the river and down the valley to the village of their choice. Their bus would take the road.

Some Final Thoughts: As with all tourism planning for development in China, much of it is top-down and driven by government as the key stakeholder. Increasingly, however, authorities accept and invite additional stakeholders to participate in the formulation of planning, and slowly community based tourism among the Minorities is reaching out to those most directly affected, and their views and proposals taken into account. Many Chinese planners have trained in western countries and mixed teams (i.e. of both Chinese and international experts) provide a strong combination to bring global best practice into an informed socio-cultural synthesis with Chinese values and priorities that may be difficult for a non-Chinese to fully appreciate. In the case of Tibet this has proved especially important where the environment and the culture require sound, sensible and sensitive management. In Tibet, one advantage of planning for tourism is that often one is dealing with a ‘greenfields’ situation (i.e. no prior development); and since the authorities are not only open to global best practice but keen to pursue innovation as part of China’s Western Development Project (involving all western provinces) they are receptive to soundly based proposals. Action invariably follows quickly once proposals have been accepted, a refreshing change from decision-making in many western countries. In posting this brief outline of recent tourism planning activities in Tibet my hope is to better inform an often uninformed world of aspects of Tibet that I have been privileged to see - *Trevor Sofield, 20 August 2008*

'Ecos' of the Twin Lakes: Ecotourism Development in Mwaam (Muanenguba), Cameroon

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Abstract

West Central African montane forest destinations are more famous as biodiversity hotspots or centres for western scientific expeditions (with undetected ecotourism). This paper is part of a pioneering initiative to profile ecotourism as it develops in Muanenguba, a mountain area in the south west of Cameroon. It is the outcome of a fieldwork process which can best be described as 'being native' by cooperating with frontline host actors to track visitors and capture ecotourism practices. The study discovers that the visitors – predominantly highly educated professionals, travel groups made of friends and families – are eco-friendly due to their backgrounds and respect for the scenic splendours of the destination. They also embrace both modern convenience and local tradition because the hosts, Bakossi villagers and other accommodation providers have, without realising it, taken a key aspect of their culture - the traditional house - Ndab Echum - to the visitors. Other interesting findings comprise the relevance of visitor opinions and proven action in identifying ecotourists, visitor interest in both dominant trip activities and ethical initiatives as well as less common travel motivations such as 'ambiance'.

Cameroon and Muanenguba

Based on language and development potential, a TV documentary assessed Cameroon as 'a global player at the periphery of mainstream society'. Despite its label as an ecotourism paradise by some visitors, Cameroon received just 451,000 tourists in 2006, still short of the objective of 500,000 to qualify as a developed tourism destination by WTO standards (Okole, 2008). Cameroon represents Africa in miniature. From the forested, coastal south and southeast to the sahelian north, Cameroon presents every visitor with diversity in natural (forests, mountains, lakes, tropical rivers, climates) and cultural attractions (folklore, enduring kingdoms, elaborate festivals, tales) created by over 200 ethnic groups. There are also hotels of international standard, golf courses, colonial relics and a diversity of ecological and wildlife sanctuaries. These resources offer various opportunities for different types of tourism. Regarding the current situation, Behrens (2005) expresses confidence that the wide range of natural and cultural attractions illustrates Cameroon's ecotourism potential. However, state incapacity, centralization and lack of an effective national strategy for tourism constitute retarding issues.

Muanenguba (4° 40' to 5° 15' N and 9° 36' to 9° 70' E) is a stratovolcano straddling the South West and Littoral Provinces of Cameroon (part of the West Cameroon Mountain Line). It occupies the northern part of the tribal Bakossiland and covers an area of about 25 square km. The current destination/summit area of Muanenguba, traditionally called Mwaam (1950-2411m above sea level) – composed of the picturesque/concentric Ebwo Caldera and Twin Lakes, the principal attractions, is the product of polygenic vulcanicity which occurred between 156-56 million years ago (Dongmo et al., 2003). Mwaam is rich in traditional history, awe-inspiring geology and scenic splendours. Its romantic setting, the open, airy, tranquil, naturally clean caldera floor, the beckoning character of the Ebwo and Alehngum Peaks, and the 'glorious views', as described by a visitor, of the famous Twin Lakes, which show an amazing contrast in colour (female-green and blue-male), all adorned by the picturesque enclosure of the rim of the caldera, add to the sense of an extraordinarily elegant destination, a welcome escape to peace and quiet. Mwaam is a destination that distinguishes a genuine nature-based tourist motivated by the need for a 'contrast to everyday life' (Mehemetoglu, 2007:111).

Lucky visitors to Mwaam are welcomed by the sight of moving schools of fish (at 200m) as soon as they stand by the concrete rest huts (buckaroos) and look down the steep-sided crater of the Female lake. Some visitors venture down to the female lake,



explore the accessible northern shores and enjoy a thrilling swim through the transparent and shallow waters where crowns of aquatic plants (fish habitats) peep through the lake floor. Although the social set-up of the Bakossiland has been historically affected by globalization (initially through Colonialism & Christianity), modernization and insitu traditional changes, the peasant/village communities, Bakossi peoples-the custodians, limited to fleeting contact with the visitors, are still rooted through reliance on 'their holders of mbwog', traditional bastions such as clan sanctuaries and sacred societies. In respect of the ethereality of Mwaam, local people consider Mwaam to be their cradle: their 'ancestors living in the Lakes'. They have reintroduced two purpose-built traditional lodges (Ndab Echum) on the northern accessible shores of the female lake in order to 'symbolize [their] custodianship of Mwaam'. This essentially and effectively has transformed into a process of attaching tradition to nature – taking a product or taking 'culture to the visitor'. Visitors appreciate this indigenous initiative. Tourism in Mwaam is managed by the Bangem Rural Council (BRC).

Fieldwork Method

This research note follows six months of field work (January to June 2007) during the dry or tourism season which lasts November to May.

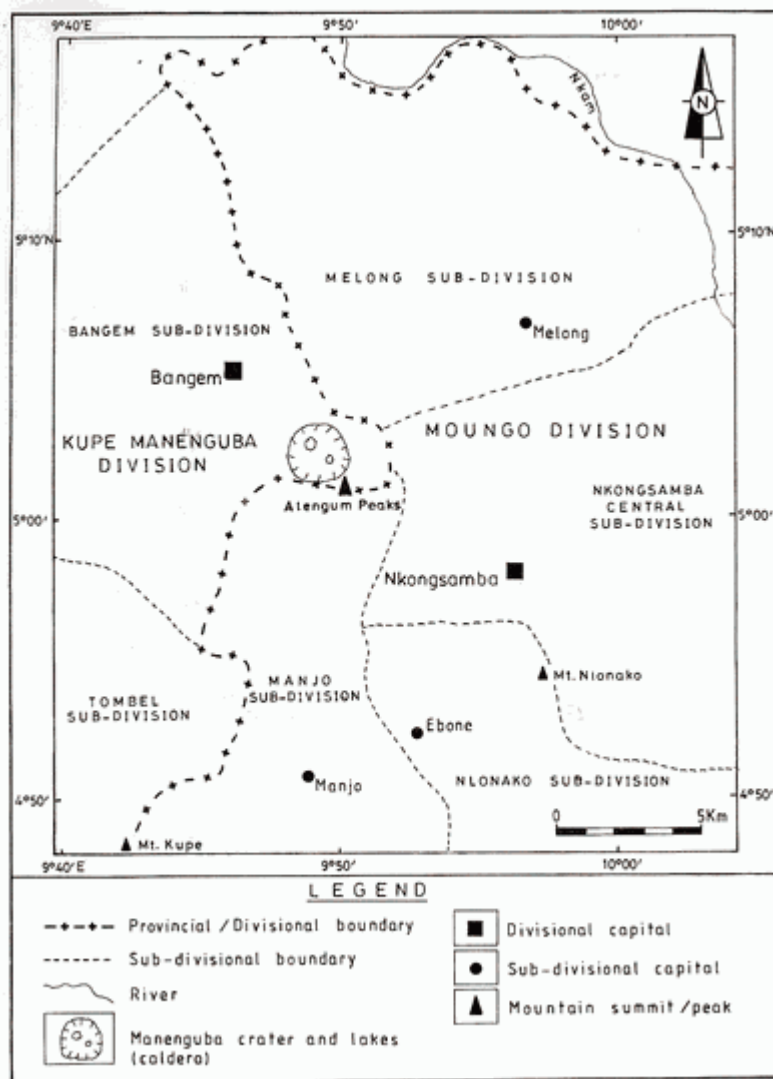
In a process best referred to as being "sensibly native", the investigator manipulated his "son-of-the soil" status. In this regard, he cooperated with main actors (hoteliers and national security officials) in order to track visitors. This was through access point

registration and in participation access point-generated guide research trips. By so doing, visitors were guided during destination tours, interviewed, and ethically monitored. In effect, the visitor referred to by indigenes as *nkale*, became the locally-preferred *nkinmut* (the interactive/accompanied stranger).

Ecotourism features

Old records reveal that tourism in the Bakossiland and Muanenguba (Mwaam) is a century old (German Colonial Society, 1906) but currently still premature and not formalized. Evidence that Mwaam is developing as a tourism destination are contained in the following findings:

Tourism occurs in, but is not strictly limited to, the dry season: November to April. The peak period is December to April, during which 80.1% of all visitors arrive, privileged by tropical montane weather. Most visitors to Muanenguba are people of working age (77.3%), predominantly highly educated professionals (about 80%-graduates and postgraduates) from Western Europe and expatriates working in Cameroon, motivated mainly by love of nature and culture. Visitors come from 33 countries. But France – former colonial master – is by far the principal supplier of visitors (57.3%). Arrivals are concentrated in Mwaam (the destination) and at the Ekom Nkam Falls where visitors stop-by. Demographic data also shows a male dominance of 13% contributed by sole male travellers and an apparent balance of married and single visitors (about 40% and about 39% respectively), etc.



Using data on motivation, the study identified 'Holidaymakers' as 51.5% of the total, general interest tourists who enjoy visiting countries, people in Africa and famous places for various experiences, unconventionally including 'ambiance' (pride – about 14%), 'self-confessed and proven Ecotourists' as 46.6%, 'proven hard-core Ecotourists' about 10%, adventure travellers, family visitors, exchange visitors, business and conference trippers.



The glorious views of the Twin Lakes of Muanenguba in Mwaan, the Female and the Male. Above, the Female Lake or Edep. Notice the two small Ndab Echum at the foreground, magnified below (Source: The Max Experience, 2005)



Male Lake or Njumue: echoing the ancestors of Bakossi (photo by Ivo Ngwese)



Data also helped identify first-time visitors (73.8%), repeat visitors - largely resident expatriates - (21.3%, average number of visits being three) persuaded by the scenic splendours of Mwaam; day visitors (12.6%), staying over visitors (87.4% staying for 2.5 days, with prevailing patterns of popular activities during the period) and the dominance of small groups (for 91.1% of the arrivals in Mwaam – averaging four persons).

Data on the trip activities revealed both dominant ecotourism/pleasure activities such as trekking and, in particular, hill walking (77.6%-figure 3); the use of binoculars and cameras for sightseeing and photography (82.7%); safaris involving birds around Mwaam, amphibians in swampy parts of Ebwo, etc, and birds and free-range animals around the villages (63.3%), as well as camping (44.0%) and ethical initiatives e.g. dealing with waste (94.5%); seeking permission to carry out some activities (43.6%); suggesting correctives (7.7%); detesting non-ethical elements (49%); and carrying out voluntary activities (15.3%). Visitors extolled many more delightful (adventure and cultural) trip activities than popular activities.



Visitors use a mix of locally-owned accommodation facilities such as ‘modern traditional lodges’ - small hotel establishments that contain traditional houses (ndab echum), the two ndab echum by the Female Lake or tents brought along with them. Interestingly, some ethical visitors kept ‘an open mind’ due to a dilemma as to what kind of accommodation they prefer, ready to embrace what the destination presents.

Tour operators are largely absent in Muanenguba. Most respondents (76.7%) organize their trips themselves with information from trusted friends and family members. Travel freedom, viability, experience and ‘easy [and independent] decision-making’ were the most important factors given by the more forthcoming visitors. It was fascinating to

note that 6.8% of all visitors who enjoy ‘friendship and cooperation with locals’, organized their trips with local accommodation establishments and villagers. This tallied with the indigene-cherished interactive visitor, *nkinmut*.

Due to limited villager/indigenous participation, the benefits of ecotourism in Muanenguba are to a large extent limited to the frontline actors. These benefits comprise access and photography fees for councils, visitor payments for accommodation (modern traditional lodges) and wages for tourism employees – hoteliers, guides and destination workers. Only anecdotal evidence exists for wider community benefits, e.g. from the petit sale of firewood in villages and the sale of some fruits, food and snack items at road-side spots (carrefours).

From the perspective of the visitors, the image of Mwaam is not undermined by premature tourism dynamics: the scenic splendours of Mwaam and life-changing experiences during fleeting interactions with some indigenes eclipse any service and logistical limitations. The future is certain for aspects of tourism in Muanenguba such as an increase in arrivals, the presence and diligence of the enlightened visitor and male dominance.

Recommendations

Due to the premature level of development, there is ample opportunity for ecotourism in Muanenguba. A useful first step will be to create a local Ecotourism Committee comprised of village representatives to work with the Bangem Rural Council (BRC) in order to manage community-based ecotourism. Committees are an existing norm for small development projects in the villages of the region.

There is a need to increase visitors’ experiences through creation of heritage trails, forest walkways, designation of well-known locations where animals can easily be sited e.g. Ebwo Peak for bird watching, as well as provision of related information. As suggested by visitors more concrete structures should be avoided. The visitors like traditional attachment to nature at the destination. Therefore more traditional houses need to be constructed at the destination and in villages en route.

There is also a need to develop the *nkinmut* concept in Muanenguba. This is by developing services and programmes that increase interaction between visitors and hosts, such as festivals during the peak period.

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