

Tourism and Environmental Justice

The tourism industry has remained narrowly focused on its commercial dimensions. This paper will begin by showing that tourism is an area rife with issues of (in)equity and (in)justice. Part of the environmental justice movement's approach has involved coming up with tools for assessing how well organizations have fulfilled the needs of communities subjected to injustices. The results of this paper will make an important contribution to understandings of justice in tourism. It will do this by exploring whether the gap found in the wider environmental arena between environmentalism and environmental justice is also evident in the tourism domain; and if such a gap is identified, analysing the roles tourism activism and scholarship might play in addressing this gap. The broader aim of our research is to fuse social movement action in tourism to achieve more holistic sustainability outcomes.

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Tourism and Environmental Justice

Tourism is not just about escaping work and drizzle; it is about power, increasingly internationalized power. That tourism is not discussed as seriously by conventional political commentators as oil or weaponry may tell us more about the ideological construction of “seriousness” than about the politics of tourism. (Enloe, 1989, p. 40)

Introduction

Tourism is frequently touted as one of the world's largest industries. International tourist arrivals grew by 4.4% in 2011 to a total 980 million and are predicted to rise to one billion in 2012 (UNWTO, 2012). United Nations World Tourism Organization Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai states that “*For a sector directly responsible for 5% of the world's GDP, 6% of total exports and employing one out of every 12 people in advanced and emerging economies alike these results are encouraging, coming as they do at a time in which we urgently need levers to stimulate growth and job creation*” (UNWTO, 2012). This commercial perspective portrays tourism as an unalloyed blessing to populations worldwide. Discourses on tourism in both public and academic spheres follow suit by characterizing it as an industry delivering foreign exchange and jobs to communities around the globe (Smith, 1988) by providing fun and/or fulfilment for the clients (Butcher, 2003). Yet beyond this discourse, one finds an abundance of strident criticisms coming from communities and non-government organisations at the grassroots. The criticisms testify to negative impacts that ravage people and places daily, which reveal tourism to be no different than other industries that produce injustices.

Tourism has not owned up to justice issues despite some rather limited gains in certification schemes for sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Tourism scholars hardly discuss justice, with rare exceptions being Scheyvens (2002), Smith and Duffy (2003), Fennell (2006), Hultsman (1995), and Higgins-Desbiolles (2008). We argue that tourism is an area rife with justice issues, especially regarding environmental (in)justice (section 2). If tourism is to take environmental justice seriously, then there needs to be criteria of direct participation to guide the pro-environmental justice activism of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (section 3). We offer case examples of two such organizations whose activities appear to be progressive on environmental justice issues (section 4). We conclude by calling for further work on this area (section 5).

Tourism and Injustice

NGOs and a small set of academics have documented injustices brought about by tourism: examples include the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, the Tourism Investigation and Monitoring Team (TIM-Team), Tourism Concern and scholars and analysts like Krippendorff (1987), McLaren (2003), and Turner and Ash (1976). There are two ways of understanding injustice that are relevant to tourism, both of which may be found operating together in various cases. The first involves forms of tourism that are indisputably exploitative, e.g. sex tourism and child sex tourism, organ-transplant medical tourism¹, poverty tourism (see Whyte et al., 2011) and cultural tourism that for example, profanes sacred rituals.

The second way involves forms of tourism that destroy the places where people live, work and play, i.e. environmental justice (EJ), which is the focus of our paper. One alarming

¹See: <http://medicaltourismblog.org/2008/09/01/the-basic-issues-of-organ-transplant-tourism/>.

EJ issue involves the dispossession of local people in places of touristic development. Mowforth and Munt, for example, note that

Of all the problems experienced by local communities facing tourism development schemes, the most harrowing involve accounts of people being displaced. Such events normally reflect the distribution of power around the activity of tourism and highlight the powerlessness of many local communities. And it seems rare that displacement and subsequent resettlement of displaced people result in more even and equal development. (2003, pp. 236–237)

While NGOs such as Tourism Concern have brought attention to dispossession in parts of Africa and Southeast Asia, tourism dispossession is now a global phenomenon. In 2009 for example, the Center of Concern advocated Gullah people's rights against tourism dispossession in the southern United States (Davis, 2009). However, while widespread, well-known and global, tourism dispossession is hard to accurately measure. Increasing pressures for tourism development make it every bit as avaricious as other land use activities—whether development occurs in coastal areas, “pristine” environments, “wild” places, “challenging” environments (e.g. adventure tourism) or unique cultural places that stand out in a rapidly globalising world.

Another related EJ issue is environmental racism. Native Hawaiian academic Haunani-Kay Trask discusses how the tourists drawn to her land for “escape” on their holidays are “*participating in the destruction of a host people in a Native place*” (1999, p. 137). At that time, Hawai'i's visitation statistics showed a tourist ratio of thirty-five tourists to every one native Hawaiian resident (Trask, 1993)—it is now approximately 50:1. The resultant crowding, pollution, pressure on Hawaiian resources, the edging out of other endeavours such as fishing, agriculture and cultural pursuits and economic inflation, result in record Indigenous Hawaiian forced migration from their homelands or alternatively difficult struggles to eke out survival on the margins of a tourism industry where low wages leave many in vulnerable situations as the ‘working poor’. In another powerful article, Trask describes how significant public and private sector structures promote tourism growth:

In Hawai'i, the destruction of our land and the prostitution of our culture is planned and executed by multi-national corporations, by huge landowners, and by collaborationist state and county governments. The ideological gloss that claims tourism to be our economic saviour and the ‘natural’ result of Hawaiian culture is manufactured by ad agencies, tour companies, and the state of Hawai'i which allocates some \$60 million dollars a year to the tourism advertising budget. (2000)

Like Trask, Raymond de Chavez (1999) describes tourism as a “*deadly force*” that opens up lands of Indigenous peoples for ecotourism that may have otherwise been left undisturbed. He explains that:

Indigenous peoples are paying a high price for tourism. In their desire to cash in on the billion-dollar profits from this industry, governments, specifically in the Third World, and transnational corporations have disregarded the interests of indigenous peoples. The effects have been devastating. Indigenous peoples have been evicted from their traditional lands, their control and access to their natural resources compromised. They

have suffered social degradation brought about by foreign influences and the commercialisation of their culture. Even the rich biodiversity of their natural resources has suffered from pollution and environmental damage, unable to support the growing number of tourist arrivals. What few benefits indigenous peoples derive from tourism are far outweighed by the damage it has caused them. They have been made to bear the brunt of an industry over which they have neither say nor control. (1999)

These cases of environmental racism suggest an extremely serious EJ issue affecting especially the Global South: the forceful incorporation of people into the global trading system on an unfair basis. Many of the world's poorest peoples are pressured to engage with tourism in the hope of harnessing tourism as a means for development. Lanfant and Graburn argue:

[tourism] is a "transmission belt" connecting the developed and the underdeveloped worlds. Tourism policy has become part of a global project which lumps together seemingly contradictory economic interests: the organization of vacations (an idea originating in rich countries) and the aspirations for development of economically weak societies. Thus "free time" resulting from the exploitation of the surplus value of capital is put back into the calculation of economic productivity. Societies inexperienced with industrialization are re-oriented toward "touristification"; tourism comes to be judged by economic and political criteria within the international framework, a vector for global integration. (1992, p. 96)

This "touristification" occurs in the context of the global "free" trade regime being established by powerful countries of the North, international trade and financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and powerful globally networked transnational corporations (TNCs). These actors are forcing a global integration, which includes tourism, through the free trade agreement for the service sector: the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). GATS is predicted to lead to greater concentration in the tourism sector as big tourism TNCs continue the trend towards vertical integration. GATS limits the capacity of developing countries to control tourism for their own benefit (Kalisch, 2001, p. 4).

Moreover, the UNWTO, founded as a specialized agency of the UN in 2003 responsible for tourism, does nothing to address justice. It is the key body in tourism at the international level, having 155 countries as members as well as over 400 affiliate members from industry and the NGO sector. Most importantly, industry interests are well articulated in the UNWTO's Business Council which contains some of the most powerful TNCs operating in the tourism industry. UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide (2011). Raoul Bianchi has stated:

The UNWTO is one of the few UN agencies that essentially represents an industry in contrast to other such UN agencies as UNEP, UNDP, and UNESCO, whose mandate covers a broader scope of human activity from culture and the environment, to science and education. This therefore predisposes the UNWTO to promote the expansion of tourism and the private sector interests behind it. (Bianchi, 2011)

Not only is tourism rife with environmental injustices, but there is an insufficient international infrastructure for addressing such injustices.

The Demands of Environmental Justice on Tourism

Tourism *must* be an active force promoting EJ. But how can tourism accomplish this? We outline in this section some theory behind EJ that sheds light on what it would mean for it to be taken seriously by tourism. By EJ, we are not referring *only* to the particular narrative from the U.S. starting from the protests of the PCB landfill in Warren County, North Carolina and moving through the United Church of Christ study on the siting of hazardous waste facilities and then President Bill Clinton's executive order 12898, which mandated federal agencies to incorporate EJ into their policies (Mohai et al., 2009). We are referring more broadly to the idea that actions that affect *places* where people live, work and play are important sources of justice or injustice, being closely tied to people's health, psychological well-being, social lives, physical health and education. EJ is important to tourism because of the latter's relation to place. Prior to its commercial or social value, tourism concerns the meaning of *place*. If space refers to the (socially constructed) abstract dimensions of some area, like borders and jurisdictions, then place refers to the ways in which human history, culture and circumstances (e.g. oppression and war), infuse the physical features and systems of an area with meaning (Casey, 1996).

Places are particularly important because they affect community self-determination. By self-determination, we mean the ability of a community to control its own destiny in ways that draw on the potential of its own historical and cultural capital and resources. Self-determination is a particularly important concept essential to the realisation of the human rights of Indigenous peoples. Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) states: "*Indigenous peoples have the right to [self-determination](#). By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development*". Article 4 continues by clarifying that: "*Indigenous people, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions*". Communities' abilities to cultivate the places where they live, work and play is vital to their having opportunities to achieve self-determination. Self-determination is not discussed here in the fuller sense of sovereignty but rather, as a fundamental ethical principle which is key to a community's capacity to encourage and realize its own aspirations.

Tourism is oriented toward place in several important respects. Tourists are attracted to travelling to other areas in terms of how they imagine them as destinations that are related to or contrasted with their own conceptions of the places where they live. Tourism involves some social imaginary about the destination. The places that tourists see as destinations are also places where communities live, work and play—integral to their self-determination. As an activity that intervenes at several scales, from regional economics to local ecosystem impacts, tourism creates conditions of justice and injustice between the tourists, tourism operators and residents. Relations of power operate between those who seek to purchase an imagined experience of some place or places; and those whose lives are firmly rooted in the place or places which tourists seek to consume. Injustices against residents of particular places are driven by tourism practices which are structured by the motivations of tourists' imaginings about the destinations they seek to experience, and/or by tourism operators' framing destinations for touristic consumption. Appropriating the experience of an exoticized 'other' in their imagined place may

be appealing to tourists, lucrative for tourism operators but at the same time deeply damaging to the people whose lives have been reduced to an entertainment or spectacle for rich outsiders.

There are two important, initial links to EJ here: First, as a place-based endeavour, tourism can be an immediate source of harm (as imposition from 'outside') against communities who already are actively trying to protect the environments where they live, work and play. Many Indigenous peoples, already enduring the long-term and ongoing effects of colonial invasion and its inevitable accompanying trauma, face these circumstances on a daily basis. Second, the EJ movement has criticized mainstream environmentalism for having a narrow conception of what, why and how 'the' environment should to be protected - and hence excluding the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and communities of colour (Bullard, 1990).

Mainstream environmentalists have proposed imagined environments worthy of preservation or restoration in ways that reproduce the marginalisation and ongoing racism experienced by Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour. The relations of power which have sought to 'otherize' and silence Indigenous voices in mainstream discourses about resource exploitation have ironically been used also by many mainstream environmentalists supposedly offering a 'different' perspective on environmental issues. As Bullard and Taylor (2000) suggest, the mainstream environmental movement has largely attracted a middle class 'white' following and hence often privileges their concerns over those of Indigenous peoples and communities of colour.

This history of EJ suggests the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations in transforming tourism. While social movements and associated NGOs have been widely hailed for fostering progressive reform agendas, not all NGOs are equally committed to such a programme. There are now numerous international NGOs that have undertaken cooperation and secured funding from governments, industry and IFIs - and hence their commitment to meaningful reforms for sustainability, equity and justice could well be questioned. As Morris-Suzuki notes, "*the key question is not whether social organizations are 'non-governmental' but whether they encourage critical reflection by members on their own position within national and transnational power structures*" (2000, p. 81).

So it is crucial to consider whether tourism NGOs will advance what we call *direct participation* by the affected communities, or a shift in power relations such that the NGO promotes community self-determination. Whyte, for example, suggests that "even when the intentions behind the practices are caring, love, concern for humanity", exploitation may result in the absence of direct and "meaningful participation" and "expression of difference" by the local community in the tourism planning process (2010, pp. 87-89; see also Figueroa, 2006). That is, a commitment to EJ does not necessarily translate into practices that shift the power relations in ways that improve communities' abilities to better seek self-determination via tourism on their own terms, instead of having the terms dictated to them by others. This includes communities' capacity to refuse tourism based on their self-determination needs. We argue that NGOs should promote the following practices:

- (1) the meaningful expression of a community's social circumstances and cultural terms in how the compensation schemes, consent processes, choices and trade-offs are determined
- (2) open forums that express community differences on how the tourism practices are conducted, especially in relation to communities' unique needs regarding self-determination

- (3) discourses used to discuss tourism in the public sphere (e.g. advertising, public relations, journalism, etc.) that express direct participation
- (4) free, prior and informed consent and the community right to refusal
- (5) non-exploitative circumstances amenable to communities' having real choices and trade-offs regarding whether to engage or not in tourism, or in certain kinds of tourism as opposed to others.

(1) and (2) are particularly important because they cannot be absent without (4) and (5) also being absent. For example, it is often the case that tourism operators boast about local community members being able to serve as tourism guides. Is the option of being a tourism guide consistent with (5)? Part of determining this would be whether the tourism operators actually fulfilled (1), which would mean that they would have had to have actively explored with community members whether it was fair to give them the option of no jobs at all or jobs as tourism guides. Is that the optimal pathway to community self-determination?

These requirements can be turned around as indicators that can be applied to NGOs. Do NGOs facilitate fulfilment of these requirements on behalf of the communities that they seek to protect? We provide, in the next section, two case examples of NGOs in order to begin a discussion about how NGOs can transform tourism towards more environmentally just practices

Case Examples

Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS)

There are few NGOs working internationally on the issue of tourism exclusively. While many of the northern NGOs (such as Tourism Concern and Tourism Watch) focus on changing the consumer choices of tourists primarily and to some extent the industry, Equitable Tourism Options, or EQUATIONS as it is better known, illustrates a different focus which comes from a grassroots integrity. Advocating local community concerns and working with local communities, EQUATIONS aims to influence government and policy makers as well as the industry to ensure that tourism is non-exploitative, equitable and sustainable (personal communications from the EQUATIONS' team by email May 16, 2012).

EQUATIONS was founded in 1985 in response to the pressures that the opening up of the national economy to globalised free trade regimes wrought on local, grassroots communities throughout India. India is well known for strong, activist communities, local government structures known as the gram panchayat system and a strong social justice vision which gave firm foundations to resist imposed development models which hurt the interests of local communities. EQUATIONS is a campaigning NGO that has effectively organised to articulate the rights of local communities and particularly the more disadvantaged including adivasis (Indigenous people), dalits, women, coastal communities and the poor. EQUATIONS' vision indicates a strong justice and equity orientation:

EQUATIONS envisions a just and equitable world, where all people have the freedom and the right to determine their lives and future. We envision forms of tourism which are non-exploitative, where decision making is democratised, and access to and benefits of tourism are equitably distributed. EQUATIONS believes in the capacity of individuals and communities to actualise their potential for the well-being of society. Towards this, we endorse justice, equity, people centred and

movementcentred activism, democratisation and dialogue as our core values. (EQUATIONS, no date)

EQUATIONS has a strong focus on supporting the struggle of local communities against tourism injustices. Key to this is their campaign and advocacy focus:

We initiate campaigns and support people's struggles, against unjust, undemocratic and unsustainable forms of tourism. We advocate people's concerns with local, regional and national government and lobby for change. Our advocacy aims for decentralised democracy and we believe that communities should have a decisive voice in the access, control and ownership over their livelihood, natural resources and common resources. We try to ensure people's experience and aspirations influences tourism policies. (EQUATIONS, no date)

A key strategy EQUATIONS has pursued has been to build a strong network approach in its advocacy so that it is well connected for its work and it is well informed on the issues. These networks spread all over India and include "*grassroots organisations, local communities, activists, researchers, trade unions, legal and policy experts, who are concerned, as we are, with ensuring that tourism planning, policy and implementation is equitable, people-centred and just*" (EQUATIONS, no date).

EQUATIONS addresses several issues that are of concern in the Indian context, including: children and tourism; ecosystems, communities and tourism; economic impacts of tourism; governance, law and tourism; tourism education; and women and tourism. In their description of this work, we can see that EQUATIONS deploys a macro approach as well as a grassroots engaged approach to achieve its justice goals. For instance, in its work on children's rights, EQUATIONS works with local communities, concerned groups and other stakeholders to ensure that tourism is not allowed to violate children's rights, a particular problem with the growing trend in child sex tourism.

In political terms, EQUATIONS works with local self-governing authorities "*...to exercise their rights and to develop guidelines and mechanisms to strengthen local regulation of tourism and to ensure that they play an active and decisive role in tourism development*" (EQUATIONS, no date). At the macro level, EQUATIONS "*...provide[s] a developing-country perspective at the national and international fora on the impacts of trade and economic policies on tourism development and community benefit*" (EQUATIONS, no date). Its overall strength lies in

...linking grassroots struggles with macro-level policy spaces – both national and international. It also implies that we are constantly speaking on issues of justice and equity from a south perspective which is not very popular. Often we have to resort to fairly confrontative positions and strategies such as campaigns and legal action (personal communications from the EQUATIONS' team via email May 16, 2012).

EQUATIONS work is well respected and they have some notable successes. One example which illustrates the nature of their work and its relevance to environmental justice analysis is that of:

Himachal Pradesh, a state in North India, where the government under pressure from the industry lobby, removed a provision in the land policy opening the way for massive private and foreign investment in the tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh, which had previously been restricted. ABF International came to India in 2005 to invest \$300 million in a Ski Village. The proposed project would have granted irrevocable rights to the use of water, power and land to the company without proper public consultation. The result would have been an assault on the natural resources on which local communities depend for their livelihoods. HimNitiAbhiyan, Jan JagranEvamVikasSamiti, several local NGOs along with EQUATIONS conducted a study in 2008 which documented the serious flaws and risks involved in the project. This report along with a strong campaign of mass protests from local people on the ground revealed the strong discontent of local communities towards the project. This combined with the lack of an appropriate environmental impact assessment resulted in the Government of Himachal Pradesh cancelling the project. (http://equitabletourism.org/files/fileDocuments1232_uid18.pdf)

Figure 1 represents EQUATIONS' vision statement and indicates how principles of environmental justice underpin its vision. It clearly demonstrates that EQUATIONS works to support community self-determination and actively works to overturn exploitation and power discrepancies.



Figure 1: EQUATIONS' vision

Alternative Tourism Group and the Code of Responsible Tourism to Palestine

One of the key issues of injustice currently confronted in the global community is the ongoing and illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. This occupation has featured serious injustices such as the erection of the separation barrier, the building of illegal settlements, the restriction of movement through checkpoints and roadblocks, the ongoing violation of human rights and continued displacement of people. Serious environmental justice issues arise from these measures; including land confiscations, water and resource deprivations and stifled economic opportunities (ATG and JAI, 2011). What is little recognised is that tourism has a powerful role to play in the (in)justice issues that are confronted here. Since 1967, when Israel took over Jerusalem and occupied the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian entry into the tourism market was quashed by a number of measures which Stein (1995, p. 17) describes as "*forced underdevelopment*" and which we argue is an EJ issue.

Israel has pursued a two-track course in its use of tourism as a political tool of occupation: it has demonised Palestinians to scare off potential tourists and it has also “occupied” much of the tourism sector for its own benefit. In terms of the former, Israel has used political propaganda and travel warnings to paint Palestinians as at best dishonest and at worst as potential terrorists (Kassis, 2006). In terms of the second strategy, Israel as an occupying power has multiple capacities to usurp tourism’s potential for its own benefit, while denying it as an industry resource for the Palestinian community. Such measures have included: a refusal to train and license Palestinian tour guides, the imposition of crippling municipal taxes and a refusal to license hotel renovations or new developments in Palestinian areas (Stein, 1995, p. 17). Bush (1996) noted that Israeli control of access to airports and highways has given it a chokehold on tourism. As a result, “*Israel has maintained a virtual monopoly over the tourism industry, exploiting Palestinian resources and heritage while excluding Palestinians from tourism’s economic, political, and human benefits*” (Kassis, 2006). As Solomon has noted recently, “*the number of Palestinian heritage sites now appropriated by Israel is yet another instrument of the occupation to take away the best for the occupier and leave Palestine deprived even of its own natural historical culture and heritage*” (2012). The worst impact is the damage to people’s sense of identity and belonging as tourism is used as an opportunity to tell a Zionist narrative that erases Indigenous Palestinian history and renders Palestinian people all but invisible: “*tourism in Israel became a vehicle for historical myth and the continuation of the occupation*” (Kassis, 2006).

The Alternative Tourism Group of Palestine (ATG) was established in this context with the vision of using an alternative form of tourism for “*resistance and understanding*” (Elias Rishmawi, cited in Stein, 1995, p. 18). Established in 1995, the ATG is a Palestinian NGO specialising in tours and pilgrimages to Palestine which offer opportunities to engage with the lived experiences of Palestinians, despite the occupation - and with the hope of overturning it. ATG offers “*justice tourism*” experiences, which it describes as “*tourism that holds as its central goals the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, positive cultural exchange between host and guest through one-on-one interaction, the protection of the environment and political/historical education*” (ATG, no date). ATG’s specific objectives include:

- to modify the tendencies of mass tourism in “the Holy Land” to establish a more human-oriented tourism
- to put foreign tourists in direct contact with the Palestinian population in order to help them develop a better understanding of Arab Palestinian culture and history
- to break down the negative stereotypes of Palestine and its people that predominates in the West
- to achieve more balance between the revenues of the Palestinian and Israeli tourism sectors by using Palestinian infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, transportation, guides, etc.)
- to augment the number of tourists visiting Palestine and increase the length of their stay in Palestinian areas
- to develop amongst tourists a knowledge of Palestinian culture and the socio-political situation in Palestine
- to encourage instructive and authentic meetings with the Palestinian people to develop amongst tourists an objective understanding of everyday realities of the Israeli occupation

- to offer tourists the opportunity to share unique experiences with Palestinians through volunteer work with nongovernmental organisations (olive harvesting, tree planting, etc.). (Rami Kassis, Executive Director of the ATG, pers. comm., 12 March 2009)

Through these methods, the ATG “*seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people and to contribute towards establishing a just peace in the area*” (ATG, no date). Since 1995, the ATG has hosted more than 20,000 visitors to Palestine (Rami Kassis, pers. comm., 21 March 2009). Its programs include pilgrimage tours, political tours, cultural and heritage tours, solidarity tours and homestays which offer a spectrum of opportunities for visitors at all stages of awareness to open up their hearts and minds to the situation experienced by Palestinians. The ATG is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to give voice to the Palestinian community which is suffering in one of the most severe examples of oppression and marginalisation to be found in contemporary times. In addition to these diverse tour itineraries, in 2007 the ATG helped form the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) which brought together all stakeholders in Palestinian tourism to create a strong and sustainable tourism sector. It additionally was instrumental in the development of a ‘code of conduct for tourism in the Holy Land’.

The vision statement, in addition to commitments to sustainability and fair trading practices, expresses an aim to change travel patterns so that tourists visit Palestinian locations “*in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues to all people in this land*” (PIRT, 2008). The code of conduct alerts the tourists to ways to engage with the Palestinian people and their lived reality and to commit to sharing what they learn from the Palestinians with their home communities on their return. It additionally asks the operators in the Palestinian tourism sector to commit to a set of practices that engages with the tourists in a fair and responsible manner and to consider the impacts they might have on the visitors’ perceptions of Palestine, its people and their reality.

This case study demonstrates that tourism contains serious EJ issues and suggests ways in which embedded NGOs can also use tourism to counter injustices both caused by tourism and wider than its domain. In this case we see tourism being utilised for the most daunting task possible; challenging and proposing alternatives to an occupation that prevents peaceful co-existence not only at the local level but also at the global level.

Conclusion

Tourism is an arena rife with justice issues and acts of injustice despite all efforts to characterise it as a commercial activity free of ethical concerns. As we have demonstrated here, powerful interests gain benefits from exploiting, marginalising and dispossessing local communities in the effort to gain profit from tourism developments. While efforts to attain sustainability outcomes in tourism mean that some big NGOs have made some small gains in developing policy and measures to address environmental concerns, we argue that environmental justice concerns being articulated by grassroots communities and advocated for by local groups will be essential to the achievement of sustainable change.

The advocacy of the tourism NGOs we have highlighted here suggests that justice and equity comes from a grassroots, bottom-up approach and not from the top-down imposition of interventions by global players like the UNWTO. We argue that there is a need for a much greater emphasis in research on the relationship between environmental justice (EJ) and tourism. This is especially important to the Global South and to Indigenous peoples around the world. We argue also that there is an urgent need for more support for NGOs such as those highlighted above as in

our view, these represent a most hopeful means for the dynamic enactment of environmental justice (EJ) advocacy and offer a timely challenge to the under-discussed but concerning trends evident in contemporary tourism.

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