COMMUNITY VIEWS OF ECOTOURISM

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Abstract: Ecotourism can be an incentive for conservation, especially when it triggers positive economic change. Yet it introduces many changes to communities:positive and negative, social and economic. The full range of change is seldom evaluated in direct relation to conservation at the local level. In this study of three Amazon ecotourism projects, local leaders discussed changes from ecotourism in their communities. Economic benefits were mentioned, but so were new restrictions on time, decreased reciprocity, and social conflict. Other changes included heightened self-esteem and greater community organization. Such shifts should be considered in relation to conservation as they affect the stability of local institutions and the prospects for long-term collective action for resource management. **Keywords:** participatory evaluation, benefits, conservation, institutions, Amazon. © 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Opinions communautaires sur l'écotourisme. L'écotourisme peut motiver la conservation, surtout quand il déclenche des changements économiques positifs. Pourtant, les nombreux changements peuvent être positifs et négatifs, sociaux et économiques. La totalité de ces changements est rarement évaluée en relation directe à la conservation locale. Dans cette étude de trois projets écotouristiques en Amazonie, les leaders de la population locale ont mentionné les bénéfices économiques mais aussi les nouvelles restrictions sur le temps, la réciprocité diminuée et le conflit social. D'autres changements comprenaient un respect de soi accru et une meilleure organisation communautaire. On devrait considérer de tels retournements en relation à la conservation et leur effet sur la stabilité des institutions locales ainsi que les perspectives pour l'action collective pour la gestion des ressources à longue terme. **Mots-clés:** évaluation participative, bénéfices, conservation, institutions, Amazonie. © 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is notorious for its potential to disrupt, disturb, or otherwise do damage to natural habitats and local communities. Especially in rural settings, tourism has been known to trigger a cascade of social, ecological, cultural, and economic changes not easily managed by local

residents (Belsky 1999; Butler and Hinch 1996; Stonich 1998, 2000). Yet, it may also be the industry most lauded for its potential to do better. Alternatives like ecotourism, volunteer tourism, and agritourism are aimed at getting tour operators to tread more carefully in their encounters with communities and ecosystems (Eadington and Smith 1992). Ecotourism is the option perhaps most frequently touted for its potential. It has been ascribed with the power to sustain rural livelihoods (Honey 1999), catalyze new development (Weaver 1998), renew cultural pride (Epler Wood 2002), empower local peoples (Scheyvens 1999), and protect biodiversity (Christ, Hillel, Matus and Sweeting 2003).

Proponents of ecotourism have debated guidelines, definitions, and principles *ad infinitum*, but many agree on one idea: a greater proportion of tourism benefits should go directly to the peoples and places featured in the brochures, websites, and guidebooks (Weaver 2001). Though local residents almost always pay the social and environmental costs of conventional forms of tourism, they seldom partake fairly in the benefits (West and Carrier 2004). By contrast, ecotourism is designed to channel greater benefits directly to communities.

Benefits have figured most prominently in conservationists' discussions of ecotourism. They are often described as incentives for residents to protect the wildlife, forests, rivers, and other attractions tourists pay to see (Ross and Wall 1999a). In a United Nations report, Bovarnick and Gupta (2003) argue that locals are likely to gain incentives for protecting natural resources, but only if they receive a good portion of these benefits. Similarly, directors of the Biodiversity Conservation Network reason, ''If local communities receive sufficient benefits from an enterprise that depends on biodiversity, then they will act to counter internal and external threats to that biodiversity''(BCSNet 1999:3). As a result of these ideas, many in the conservation community have endorsed ecotourism with significant injections of project funds, personnel, and technical support (Doan 2000; Kiss 2004).

Though much has been written on the utility of channeling benefits to local communities, less has focused on how benefits should be defined or measured, or on why certain kinds matter for conservation. Benefits have been defined as primarily economic, measurable as new employment or cash income (Campbell 1999; Gossling 1999; Walpole and Goodwin 2001; Wunder 1999, 2000). In an overview of peer-reviewed articles, Agrawal and Redford (2006) found that newly generated local jobs and incomes were the most common ''indicators of success''. Langholz (1999), for example, argued that ecotourism income can minimize or eliminate dependence on activities that exploit natural resources, such as commercial agriculture, logging, and cattle ranching. Bookbinder, Dinerstein, Rijal, Cauley and Rajouria (1998) also measured benefits as economic and concluded that ecotourism generally does *not* generate enough support to provide sufficient incentives for conservation.

Economic benefits may be paramount to success, but noneconomic ones can also influence chances for conservation. These include new

skills, broader experiences in managing people and projects, strength-
ened abilities to negotiate with outsiders, and expanded circles of con-
tacts and support for community efforts. Scheyvens (1999) has
characterized these kinds of benefits as community empowerment.
Others have considered them as facets of social capital that help
strengthen local institutions for resource management (Jones 2005;
Pretty and Smith 2003).

   Yet non-economic changes are precisely the ones that can be difficult
to measure, quantify, and evaluate systematically across sites or over
time. This is partly because non-economic factors are often expressed
in qualitative or context-specific narratives that defy easy ranking or
comparison. For example, Wunder (1999) has suggested that ethnic,
cultural, and historical influences can affect the link between economic
benefits and conservation. As such, non-economic benefits are rarely
analyzed as potential causal mechanisms for conservation. This is de-
spite the fact that a number of scholars have argued that success de-
pends, in part, on local participation and other non-economic factors
(Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, and Schelhas 2003).

   With these trends in mind, the authors gathered ethnographic data
from three community-based projects in the Amazon to address two
overarching questions: what kinds of changes—beyond or in addition
to economic benefits—are introduced to local communities, and what
are the implications of the array of changes for community institu-
tions and long-term conservation and development? By beginning to an-
swer these questions for three sites, in collaboration with local leaders,
the larger goal has been to build a holistic and participatory framework
for assessing the ways in which communities are affected by ecotourism.

DEFINING BENEFITS

   By some accounts, ecotourism has created only meager economic
benefits for communities (Kinnaird and O'Brien 1996). Leakage of
profits from local to outside operators has been a major problem (Hon-
ey 1999; Lindberg 1994). Though tourists often pay heftily for their eco-
expeditions, many tour operators have been reluctant to share the re-
turns with local communities (Landell-Mills and Porras 2002). In fact,
relatively few communities have realized significant benefits of any kind,
regardless of their proximity to tourism operations or protected areas
(Lindberg, Enriquez, and Sproul 1996; Stone and Wall 2004).

   A number of economists have questioned the idea that income and
employment will lead unambiguously to conservation. Research has
shown that ecotourism rarely replaces other relatively destructive activi-
ties. Instead it becomes an add-on that, by some interpretations, con-
tributes to problems of degradation. Ferraro (2001) notes that new
income can ultimately exacerbate habitat loss by enhancing the buying
power for more labor, technology, and capital local residents use to ex-
pand resource use (Taylor, Yunez-Naude and Ardila 2003). Similarly,
Barrett, Brandon, Gibson and Gjertsen (2001) find that increased
income, especially when poorly linked with conservation goals and

backed by weak or no enforcement, ''simply fosters more rapid resource extraction'' (2001:500).

Other scholars have found that incentives are often too short-lived to make a difference for conservation (Kiss 2004). Though income and employment can help prompt changes in what people do, there may be no concomitant change in peoples' ideas and beliefs (Stem et al 2003). That is, ecotourism may alter local economies, but it probably stops short of truly changing fundamental social and cultural patterns of resource use. Without such shifts, the logic holds, people are likely to revert to their old ways when the cash flow ends and financial incentives disappear (Pretty and Smith 2003).

Yet, even when revenues are present, the infusion of new earnings itself can present challenges for residents. For example, when people shift entirely from other income sources, they become vulnerable to boom-bust cycles and seasonal fluctuations of the tourism market (Epler Wood 2002). Another challenge of new revenues is managing social conflicts that emerge from unequal earnings and increased gaps between rich and poor (Cousins and Kepe 2004; Ogutu 2002). Without experience in managing such conflicts, revenues can serve only to weaken trust and cohesion in local communities (Jones 2005).

As income is often insufficient for—or can even work against—conservation and development, other kinds of benefits may be especially critical. Participation in ownership and management is a noneconomic benefit that is discussed often in case studies but seldom measured in direct relation to conservation, with a few notable exceptions. Scheyvens (1999) has argued that participation is linked with conservation because ecotourism ventures are more likely to lead to stewardship when locals gain some measure of control and share equitably in the benefits. Kruger (2005) likewise reports that participation matters for conservation. In a study of 57 projects, conservation occurred in 17% that had communities involved in decision making. Belsky (1999) also concludes that participation is linked to conservation, but only if communities truly benefit from the influx of tourists.

An increasing number of scholars are hypothesizing that ecotourism's real connection to conservation comes through participation in ownership and management rather than through economic benefits alone. The catalyzing effect of participation may be that it can help build skills in leadership and strengthen local institutions while also ensuring that residents are able to translate economic benefits into broader goals. In other words, though new employment, cash, revenues, and other economic benefits may lead to more robust local economies (which ultimately will either support or undermine conservation), participation in ownership and management may lead to new learning and greater local cohesion. These kinds of changes that result from community participation—both as part of the process and as a benefit—have often been included in integrative assessments of development (Becker 1997; Bond, Curran, Kirkpatrick, Lee and Francis 2001), and more recently in tourism development (Li 2006).

Anthropologists have long pointed to the need to pay greater attention to values, social relations, and institutions, as opposed to just economic change, in conservation projects (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998; Russell 2003). Many have shown that one obstacle to conserving biodiversity is the weakness of existing local institutions (Barrett et al 2001; Becker 2003; Weinberg, Bellows and Ekster 2002), which are essentially ''rules of the game'' in a society or community (North 1990). An institution's rules are understood by all, and they guide the things people do as individuals in a larger collective. Strong local ones are based on relations of trust, reciprocity, common rules, norms and sanctions, and strong networks—what Putnam (2000) and Pretty and Ward (2001) call ''social capital'' (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000).

Scholars also have shown how local institutions are central to over-coming the ''tragedy of the commons'' (Agrawal 2001; Berkes 2004; McCay and Acheson 1987; Ostrom 1990). With strong institutions, there is no tragedy because communities are able to cooperate effectively for long-term management of shared resources. For example, people may voluntarily help protect a community forest or restrict hunting and fishing near a community-based lodge, but only if they have the confidence and trust that others in the group will follow the same rules and/or face sanctions if they break the rules.

Study Methods

In 2003, leaders of three ecotourism partnerships in the Amazon regions of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia joined in a comparative study called the ''*Trueque Amazónico*: Ecotourism Exchanges in the Tropical Andes''. The aim was to bring local voices to the fore in ecotourism analyses. The ecolodges are community-initiated and community-managed, though all began as partnerships between indigenous peoples, private companies, and/or nongovernmental organization (NGOs).

In these partnerships, indigenous communities link their knowledge, land, labor, and social capital with the investment capital, business acumen, and managerial experience of outside tour operators and environmental NGOs (Ashley and Jones 2001; Forstner 2004). The *Trueque Amazonico* was an opportunity to learn from three kinds of partnerships: community-NGO, community-private company, and federation-private company. Community members in each site share profits, but they are also engaged in determining the direction and future of tourism in their region (Table 1).

Community-NGO.   Chalalán is an ecolodge owned by San Jose de Uchupiamonas, a Quechua-Tacana community in Bolivia's Madidi National Park. Madidi encompasses cloud forest, rainforest, and savanna and is considered a ''biodiversity hotspot'' (Myers, Mittermeier, Mittermeier, da Fonseca and Kent 2000). Chalalán began in 1998 with substantial (US$1.25 million) investment from the Inter-American Development Bank and five years of technical support from the environmental NGO, Conservation International. Leaders from San Jose said they

Table 1. Community-based Ecotourism Lodges in the Study

Lodge	Chalalán	Posada Amazonas	Kapawi
Partnership Model	Community-NGO	Community-Private Company	Federation-Private Company
Country	Bolivia	Peru	Ecuador
Region	Alto Madidi	Tambopata	Pastaza
Protected Area	Madidi Natl. Park	Bahuaja-Sonene Natl. Park	Kapawi Reserve
	1,895,740 hectares	1,091,416 hectares	700,131 hectares
Community	San José de	Native Comm. Infierno	58 Achuar communities
	(60-70 families)	(120-150 families)	(hundreds of families)
Ethnicity	Tacana and Quechua	Ese eja and riberenho	Achuar
Partner	Conservation International (NGO)	Rainforest Expeditions (private tourism company)	Canodros, S.A. (private tourism company)
Ecosystem	Lowland rainforest	Lowland rainforest	Lowland rainforest
Revenue-sharing model	50% to shareholders (74 families); 50% to community-wide fund	Profits divided 60% to community and 40% to Rainforest Expeditions	Monthly concession fee of $3,800, plus 10 per tourist
Tourists/year	1,000	5,400	1,800
Beds	24	60	50

built Chalalan to help secure their native territory and develop their community. In 2002, they assumed full ownership and management of Chalalán. Of all profits, 50% go to a community fund, which is used primarily for health and education.

Community-Private Company. Posada Amazonas is a joint venture between the Lima-based private tour company, Rainforest Expeditions, and the Native Community of Infierno, a mixed-ethnic community of Ese eja Indians, ribereños, and Andean colonists (Stronza, 1999, 2005, 2007). The partners signed a 20-year contract in 1996, agreeing to split profits, 60% to Infierno and 40% to Rainforest Expeditions, and to share in management. The lodge accommodates up to 60 guests and features cathedral ceilings of hand-woven thatch, and a 40-meter canopy tower. It is located on the Tambopata River, near the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park. Like Madidi, it is a ''hotspot'' for biodiversity (Myers et al 2000). Wildlife attractions include a population of giant otters and a macaw clay lick.

Federation-Private Company. Kapawi is the result of a partnership between the Achuar indigenous federation and the Ecuadorian company, Canodros (Rodriguez 1999). The Achuar leased land to Canodros for 15 years, until 2011, and agreed to share benefits. The Achuar

represent a significant portion of the staff, and they participate in training to assume full responsibilities and ownership over Kapawi. The lodge was built by the Achuar in traditional style and features low-impact technology for waste management and energy. Cultural and ecological interactions between the Achuar and the rainforest are featured for tourism.

Six delegates each from Kapawi, Chalalán, and Posada Amazonas were selected by their communities to participate in three five-day workshops. All delegates worked in tourism and all attended the three workshops. Ten additional participants came from non-profit, research, government, and private sectors in each country. Leading up to the workshops, Peruvian, Ecuadorian, and Bolivian investigators were selected to lead collaborative research on impacts. Each coordinator lived in a community for at least three months to conduct ethnographic research and semi-structured household interviews. In practice, ethnography entailed gathering descriptive data of people's daily activities through direct, first-hand observation and detailed field notes. The researchers also engaged in conversations with people at different levels of formality, from small talk to long interviews. Longer interviews with key informants were carried out to discuss particular areas of community life, especially as they were changing in the context of ecotourism.

Semi-structured interviews focused on social, economic, cultural, and environmental changes associated with ecotourism, and each interview lasted 2-3 hours. A stratified purposive sample of respondents was drawn from each community. In all, 164 households were interviewed: 62 from Peru, 67 from Bolivia, and 35 from Ecuador, representing 45%, 55%, and 7% of the populations of the communities, Infierno, San Jose de Uchupiamonas, and the Achuar Federation, respectively. The goal was to interview a broad representation of people who were highly engaged as well as those who were not. ''Highly engaged'' meant they were working directly for one of the companies and/or had been involved in planning and implementation from the beginning. ''Not involved'' were those who had at least received a share of profits from one of the lodges but had not worked as an employee or in any planning or managerial positions.

The interview guide shared a common framework for the three countries but also included some culturally-specific questions. The framework was developed during the ethnographic phase of the research to include questions of particular relevance and meaning to each of the respective communities. In open-ended interviews, people were asked what they considered important indicators of success, and what factors they wanted to compare among the three sites. Once the ethnographic phase was complete, the coordinators met to develop a questionnaire that encompassed identified concerns and indicators and would be comparable across sites.

The coordinators also worked with three community leaders to develop agendas for the workshops. The tri-national team helped ensure the workshops were planned with a wide range of perspectives in mind. As part of a needs assessment, two meetings in each community were

held to solicit broader feedback on planning. The resulting list included six main themes: partnerships, capacity-building, distribution of benefits, changes, management of resources, and monitoring.

During the plenary meetings of each workshop, delegates exchanged experiences and discussed results of the ethnographic data. The goal for thematic discussions was to build consensus on best practices in community partnerships. Focus groups during the workshops lasted 4-5 hours each and resulted in lists of lessons learned from each site. The focus group data presented here are derived primarily from the third workshop (in Kapawi), which addressed the theme of ''changes''. Each of three focus groups comprised 10-12 men and women who discussed changes associated with ecotourism, and then characterized the changes as either benefits or costs.

The data here were taken from two sources: focus groups and interviews. Interview data represent a broader range of community voices, while the focus group data are skewed toward men who work directly in tourism. The narratives gathered during the meetings and interpreted below convey a level of agreement that is not mirrored in the mix of responses from the household interviews. This is because one of the goals of the workshops was to derive consensus, especially among community members who were highly engaged in tourism.

Participatory Framework

Stone and Wall observe that ''relatively few assessments of ecotourism's impacts at the local level have been performed'' (2004:13). Even fewer have emerged from the experiences and perceptions of locals. Moreover, findings are often presented in fora that are relatively inaccessible to local peoples, such as international conferences and academic journals. In the *Trueque*, community members were involved in every phase of the analysis and exchange. Together with the authors, local leaders proposed the idea of conducting a comparative analysis to donors (the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund), helped gather and assess ethnographic data, co-facilitated workshops in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, and presented results to press conferences in Quito and La Paz.

The participatory approach implied a gathering and reading of the data that differs from studies directed solely by scholars. One difference is that benefits and indicators of success in each site were determined by emic, or subjective and culturally-embedded views, rather than just etic ones, or those defined by scholars, NGOs, conservationists, or other external actors. In cultural anthropology, an emic account of behavior is one that is couched in terms meaningful to the actor; an etic account is one that is given in terms that can be applied to other groups (Harris 1976; Pike 1954). Emic is culturally-specific, whereas etic is culturally neutral. The authors gathered both to gain culturally meaningful narratives in ethnographic case studies as well as information that could be compared across sites.

Ross and Wall (1999a,b) developed an evaluative framework, used to compare ecotourism in three protected areas in Indonesia. They argue that the success of ecotourism depends on building ''harmonious relationships'' in three ways: between natural areas and local residents, between local residents and tourism, and between tourism and protected resources. Further, by examining ''synergistic links'' among tourism, biodiversity, and local communities, appropriate management strategies can be devised. Their framework makes it possible to compare outcomes across sites, linking field observations and interview responses with indicators of success. Similarly, Weinberg et al (2002) evaluated projects in New Zealand and Costa Rica, using interviews to solicit perceptions of failures and successes along specific criteria. De los Monteros (2002) distributed a questionnaire to tour operators in Mexico to assess perceived benefits and costs. All these frameworks share *a priori* indicators.

While the authors adhere to a holistic and comparative approach, the framework used here engages local residents in the research process. This entailed asking people not just to respond to questions, but also to help determine which questions were most relevant to ask and to gather data and interpret results. As such, this approach takes assessment out of solely academic realms and puts it back into communities for applied learning and action. While others have written about the role of participation in planning and management (Garrod 2003; Guevara 1996), this framework carries participation to the latter phases of evaluation. This can be empowering, as local peoples represent and express their own experiences, in their own languages, both literal and metaphorical.

For example, in interviews before the workshops, the team of researchers, which included local leaders, talked with heads of households in each site to ask if and how they felt ''richer'' as a result of tourism. Many said yes, they felt richer, though others said no. When the results were compiled, participants elaborated on variable meanings of the term ''rich''. They explained that some people meant more than revenues and dollars from tourism. Instead, they said they felt rich ''because we have trees, rivers, fish'', or ''because now we have more friends and contacts'', or ''because we have greater understanding about conservation''. Another commented, '''Rich' does not mean accumulation but rather the ability to help one's own family and others''. The Achuar participants from Ecuador rejected the terms of the question outright. They explained ''The Achuar have always been rich in nature'', and ''no one is richer than another among the Achuar''. This explanation led to new discussions of changes among the Achuar, now that some are working in the tourism economy and others are not.

In summary, the study methods were both ethnographic and comparative, but also participatory. The former method enabled an understanding of how benefits are perceived and dealt with within larger social, cultural, and economic contexts of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The design also furthered goals of self-representation in the three host communities.

Local Perceptions

Among 136 interview respondents who identified ''benefits from ecotourism'', 73% pointed to ''economic benefits''. For most, ecotourism is primarily a good way to make a living. In all three sites, most people reported income either from direct employment (as managers, guides, housekeepers, boat drivers, and the like), or from sales of foods, handicrafts, transportation, or other services. Each of the projects has systems for distributing profits, so that even people not directly connected with tourism earn something by virtue of the fact that they are members of the community and thus shareholders in the operation.

In Infierno, 20-25 families receive direct income from Posada Amazonas. Opportunities for employment rotate every 2-3 years throughout the community of 150 households. At least a few workers have abandoned other activities and shifted entirely to tourism. Others have added tourism to their farming and forest extraction, adjusting the time they spend in each, depending on time of year and number of tourists. One advantage, several noted, is that it offers steady and predictable monthly income. ''This allows us to save money for emergencies'', one Achuar man from Kapawi explained. A delegate from Posada Amazonas elaborated, ''I have money now to pay for water and electricity in town, and I don't have to wait for months or a year''.

A second most-frequently cited benefit, identified by 33% of the respondents, is ''learning opportunities''. People noted that from working in their own lodges they have gained the skills to pursue employment in other lodges. ''It's changed my idea of work in my life'', said one man from Kapawi. ''Now that I know the lodge, I want to work for longer periods of time and learn more''. The opportunity to learn by doing has also enabled many to establish other businesses. This has been especially advantageous to community members in Tambopata and Madidi, where numbers of tourists have been increasing. Aside from income and learning, respondents identified a change in social benefits, including better healthcare, education, and amenities, such as potable water and plumbing. The transportation and communication infrastructures developed for ecotourism were also identified, including motorized canoes, small planes, solar panels, and radios. Tourists' philanthropy has provided some additional support for health or educational facilities and services.

People also described shifts in personal and family life. Of 91 respondents, 45% said that the possibility of ''learning and interacting with people of other cultures'' represented the most important change. A man from Posada Amazonas noted, ''I know how to talk to more kinds of people now''. Several women acknowledged, in particular, a feeling of being able to assume new roles and engage in more activities beyond the household. One woman said, ''Working in tourism has given me strength in knowing that women can get ahead alone. We don't have to depend on men''.

The delegates from Posada Amazonas agreed that they are increasingly comfortable with submitting ideas and proposals for

collaboration with NGOs. Respondents from Chalalán also highlighted the opportunity to develop professional relations among their lodge, their community, and government institutions in Bolivia, particularly with the national park authorities. For example, they have worked with the park to monitor wildlife populations and have lobbied to change national policies on taxation of community-run enterprises.

''Having more money'' and ''experiencing personal growth'' tied as the second most frequently cited change in personal and family life. Some delegates explained that the changes have, in some cases, been altogether transformative. ''I've become more responsible'', a man from Chalalán commented; ''working in the lodge wakes you, opens your eyes to a new vision for conservation and for my family''. A delegate from Posada Amazonas concurred, ''I feel stronger. I get along better with my family. Through contacts I have with people from Lima and other places outside the community, I have a bigger social circle. I'm learning, re-making myself''.

Focus group responses about changes mirrored data from the household interviews. To the open-ended question, ''How has the community changed since the ecotourism lodge opened'', delegates identified many of the same points they had noted in individual interviews, aside from a couple of exceptions from Chalalán and Posada Amazonas. Chalalán's delegates talked about slowing the pace of out-migration from their community. ''Years ago, people abandoned San Jose'', recalled the general manager for Chalalán, ''but now they are returning because they have pride in the success of Chalalán. They see opportunities here''. The delegates from Posada Amazonas emphasized an increased concern for resource management: ''Now we are creating zones for conservation, thinking about future projects. We are also creating sanctions for people who break our zoning rules and hunt on trails near the lodge''. Delegates across the three groups agreed in general that they spend more time in meetings talking about tourism.

Changes did not always signify ''benefits''. Perceived costs included shifting away from what they had before tourism. This cost was identified by 49% of 92 respondents. Shifts included leaving the family, losing connections with the community, leaving the farm, and having restrictions on resource use. ''Now, I relate better to people from other places and other levels'', explained one man from Posada Amazonas, ''but I miss hunting and fishing''. The cost identified most often was leaving the family (35 responses). ''Now I can buy whatever I want, but I don't get to see my kids as often'', a man from Chalalán lamented. Another from Posada Amazonas said, ''Before, I dedicated more time to my farm; now I live more in Puerto Maldonado [the nearest town]''. All of the lodges are located far (for example, 1–5 hours by motorized canoe, or several days of walking through forest) from the village centers. Though the distances pose real challenges to lodge workers who must leave their homes, they were also sometimes described in a positive light as they help keep tourists away from private family and communal life.

Another 56% of the respondents identified costs as those relating specifically to the work in tourism. These included problems with co-workers, eating new foods, handling responsibilities, and working long hours on a fixed schedule. For example, a delegate from Kapawi noted, ''I don't drink *chicha* or *guayusa* [traditional Achuar drink], and I don't hunt. Now I worry only about the lodge''. Such feelings were shared by other Achuar participants. ''Working at the lodge, I don't get sick and I enjoy myself'', another Achuar man said, ''but when I return to my house, and I eat the traditional food, I feel sick. I am forgetting how to drink the *chicha*''. In addition to changes in food and lifestyles as a result of spending more time in the lodges than at home, delegates described problems of conflict and resentment with co-workers. Generally, this kind of challenge was perceived as a result of shifting relations between people, from communal and familial relations to ones of business and hierarchy.

Though in household interviews economic benefits were cited most often, ''having more money'' was identified by a quarter of the focus group participants as triggering sometimes-negative changes in communal life. Through workshop discussions, delegates agreed that ''having more money'' was not necessarily a benefit. People agreed that profits were not sufficient to support all families substantially, or even a few families entirely. ''Ecotourism is not a solution to our economic concerns'', they concurred, ''and it is not a panacea''. This point, they said, reflected not a fault of the industry per se, but rather of expectations generated by conservationists and NGOs.

The delegates also noted that income from tourism can introduce new challenges. For example, leaders from Kapawi agreed that *mingas* (or traditional gatherings of the Achuar to complete a community task) have diminished in recent years, especially in areas nearest to the lodge. ''Before, *mingas* were more common among the Achuar'', one man explained, ''but now people want money for community work''. The erosion of traditional relations of cooperation and reciprocity has signaled other social and cultural changes. These seemed to be even more pronounced among lodge employees. A focus group from Kapawi noted, ''Because they [employees] work at the lodge, people believe they are richer, and so they get charged more for things''. The unequal treatment is leading to feelings of resentment and relative lack of cohesion. The delegates from Peru pointed out that lodge employees were, in some ways, inciting the unequal treatment, as some workers in Posada Amazonas had tried to ''buy out'' their communal work obligations.

Finally, delegates from all three sites noted a problem related to an increasing sense of dependency on tourism income. They commented that some people were starting to work less often (or with less intensity) in hunting, fishing, farming, and extraction because they were waiting for profits from tourism. ''Some have misunderstood how much they were going to benefit, and so they do nothing'', a man from Posada Amazonas explained. ''Instead of tending to their farm, they are just waiting for tourism money''.

Implications

The indigenous participants of the *Trueque Amazónico* workshops in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia agree that ecotourism introduces a series of costs as well as benefits to communities and homes. They also agree that the changes are more than economic. Delegates identified other modifications, including new opportunities to network with outside peoples and organizations, new skills and capacities, and new feelings of personal growth and self-esteem. Scheyvens (1999) has described some of these changes as comprising community empowerment. In a number of ways, such noneconomic changes have the potential to affect the social capital of host communities, at least insomuch as the concept has been described by Pretty and Ward (2001) as relationships of trust, reciprocity, and exchange. These factors, though seldom measured in direct relation with conservation, are necessary for shaping individual actions that collectively sustain local institutions, which in turn are critical to effective conservation. Furthermore, a community with lots of social capital may be better able to manage changes associated with ecotourism.

In all three cases of Posada Amazonas, Chalalán, and Kapawi, local residents have mitigated challenges of becoming a destination. Two have constructed their lodges away from the community to separate tourists from villagers, and all have created zones to delimit their activities. They use trails designed for tourism and not those used by locals; traditional or sacred areas are restricted; and visits to homes occur only when scheduled and then according only to supervised codes of conduct. Delegates agreed, ''The goal is to protect tourism from the community, and also the community from tourism''. These rules were created in all cases by the collectives, and because locals were integrally involved in management of their lodges. These findings coincide with those of Wunder (1999, 2000), who showed that the Cofan Indians of Ecuador who manage their own tourism have also been proactive in establishing land use plans, prohibitions on hunting, abandonment of dynamite fishing, and a quota system that set monthly caps on hunting per family.

The learning and networking benefits of ecotourism in the Kapawi, Chalalán, and Posada Amazonas have also been important. People say they are better organized—as well as more ''transparent'' and ''democratic''—in their processes for determining how to distribute profits. In San Jose, for example, leaders have decided that community shareholders invested in Chalalán should receive direct benefits, but so too should non-shareholders who live in the community. ''To participate'', a delegate from San Jose explained, ''you have to have been born in the community and have a home there as well. Now what we have to do is measure the participation because in one way or another, a shareholder has to contribute. What we know is that we cannot marginalize people''. Currently, non-shareholders in San Jose benefit indirectly through a community fund for education and health. In a different approach, profits from Posada Amazonas have been distributed equally throughout the community. Now, after consulting with

people from San Jose, Infierno members are discussing the pros and cons of their approach. ''It doesn't make sense for people to receive benefits simply for being community members'', one man commented, ''but we have to analyze the situation better''.

The noneconomic benefits have also helped enable the communities with new skills and ways of thinking. Respondents described greater abilities to generate novel ideas, reinvest their profits in the community, manage projects, and monitor the results of their efforts. Meanwhile, the relationships they have developed with tourists, the industry, and other organizations have led to opportunities to establish complementary small enterprises and work in other lodges and other fields. People reported that being involved in tourism gave them more than income and employment and also more than ''training'' opportunities. They described other intangibles, such as personal growth, greater ability to talk with a range of people, including newly gained temerity to talk with donors, NGOs, and other sources of potential support for the community. Overall, they described a gain in confidence and self-esteem. Delegates from all three sites agreed, ''Our communities are able to handle problems better now''.

As Weinberg et al (2002) have noted, many problems associated with ecotourism development are fixable and knowable; the challenges remain political. Specifically, communities exist in larger political systems and often lack the capacity to control broader economic effects. Communities with stronger networks and social capital may be better prepared to overcome these political challenges.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of six months in 2003, indigenous leaders from three Amazonian regions of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia came together to share their experiences, ideas, and concerns about ecotourism as a catalyst for change in their communities. The participants included former hunters who now lead tourists as birding and wildlife guides, small farmers and artisans who now sell handicrafts to tourists, fishermen who know the rivers and now supplement their incomes by driving tour boats, and local leaders who know their communities and now assume management of their own lodges. In workshops and interviews, people said they perceive ecotourism as generally positive for their families and communities. However, they identified problems as well as benefits, and they seldom spoke of economic benefits in isolation from social changes. Some of the positive changes included opportunities to gain skills and leadership, heightened self-esteem, expanded networks of support, and better organizational capacity. The negative changes were new restrictions on time, the erosion of reciprocity and other traditional relationships, and new conflicts associated with the distribution of profits.

Both the positive and negative trends identified by local leaders have potential either to strengthen or weaken social cohesion, trust,

and cooperation within communities. These factors, in turn, have direct effects on local capacity to manage common resources and achieve broader community goals. With strong local institutions, communities may also be better prepared to absorb changes, such as stratified income levels, and new forms of governance and hierarchy (such as neighbors as ''employees'', community members as ''shareholders''). Either way, ecotourism can have direct impacts on local institutions, a point that has been made by other scholars in the fields of environmental anthropology (Brosius et al 1998; Russell 2003; Stonich 2000), tourism management (Johannesson, Skaptadottir, and Benediktsson 2003), and community development (Bond et al 2001), among others.

What remains poorly understood are the conditions under which ecotourism leads to stronger or weaker local institutions. One determining factor may be the extent to which communities are engaged as owners and managers. In the cases of Posada Amazonas, Chalalán, and Kapawi, substantial community involvement has seemed to foster greater levels of trust, leadership, and organization, thus expanding social capital in each site. Further explanatory research on the causal mechanisms among ecotourism benefits, the strength of local institutions, and conservation is recommended. In particular, scholars should examine the extent to which participatory approaches can help build social capital and thus provide local communities with the capacities to translate ecotourism into broader and locally-sustained goals of conservation and development. Participation in this scenario would be treated as a benefit that then catalyzes and enables future benefits. Jones (2005) and others (Bray, Cornejo, Cohan and Beitl 2005) have made similar calls for this kind of research.

With these findings, a four-part framework for analysis of ecotourism benefits may be considered. First is the collection of both emic and etic data; second, the coupling of ethnographic case studies with more generalized, comparative studies across sites; third, attention to processes as well as outcomes; and, fourth, a collaborative approach to data collection and interpretation.

The first factor acknowledges two ways to assess how local residents perceive and respond to benefits. Emic data will define benefits in terms most meaningful to residents themselves. Etic accounts will cover meanings that register more clearly with outsiders, including conservationists, development NGOs, tour operators, and researchers. Data from both can lead to more comprehensive understandings of what benefits are (and for whom), and why and under what conditions they lead to positive outcomes for broader goals of conservation and development. This methodological approach is not new, as it has been used frequently in community development studies, either through participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1983), social impact assessment (Becker 1997; Becker, Harris, McLaughlin, and Nielsen 2003), or action research (McNiff 2001). To date, however, such participatory analyses have been relatively less common in ecotourism research, though Tsaur, Lin, and Lin (2006) have made important strides in

incorporating subjective measures of resources, community, and tourism.

Emic data can be especially important for case studies while etic data can allow for more comparative research. Thus a second factor is to conduct both types of analyses—descriptive case studies combined with comparisons of the ways in which residents of local ecotourism destinations engage in (or resist) this business. This will require applying similar methods of data collection and analysis across sites. This is especially pressing as we know from a number of examples in the world that ecotourism can sometimes work *against* the interests of local peoples and ecosystems—among pastoralists in Kenya (Charnley 2005), highland farmers in Papua New Guinea (West and Carrier 2004), and local fishers in Belize (Belsky 1999), Honduras (Stonich 2000), and the Galapagos (Honey 1999)—but can also work in their favor, as in the cases of Kapawi in Ecuador, Chalalán in Bolivia, and Posada Amazonas in Peru.

A holistic framework for understanding benefits for communities will also require attention to processes as well as outcomes. This means focusing on the ways in which ecotourism catalyzes changes within communities and leads to new ways of thinking, interacting, and behaving. It also entails turning attention to how people are engaged, and not just what they gain or lose. Such analyses will lead to greater understandings of causal mechanisms among the factors identified in Ross and Wall's (1999b) framework. That is, under what conditions and what processes of interaction do communities, protected areas, and tourism operations mutually benefit each other?

Finally, by using indicators of meaning to local residents, the framework furthers goals of evaluation while also making research itself a tool of self-representation and collaboration (Austin 2003; Jamal and Getz 1999). Such an approach takes its cue from polyphonic forms of ethnography that foreground local voices in the analyses (Sangren 1988). Crick has cautioned that scholars must be careful to see *who is* evaluating tourism, as rarely do researchers hear local voices. Without close attention to local voices, ''our social scientific work risks being descriptively poor and ethnocentric'' (1989:338). Zeppel has concurred that most published research provides a non-indigenous perspective (2007). By incorporating local voices and comparing across sites, scholars may be able to understand more clearly how ecotourism plays out in specific contexts while also synthesizing data for more general predictions. Just as ecotourism can be more effective when locals participate actively, so too can our evaluations of how and why it fails or succeeds for local communities become more meaningful when one engages locals as evaluators. ∎

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