

An Environmental Justice Framework for Indigenous Tourism

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Environmental tourism is a growing practice in indigenous communities worldwide. As members of indigenous communities, what environmental justice framework should we use to evaluate these practices? I argue that, while some of the most relevant and commonly discussed norms are fair compensation and participative justice, we should also follow Robert Figueroa's claim that "recognition justice" is relevant for environmental justice. I claim that from Figueroa's analysis there is a "norm of direct participation," which requires all environmental tourism practices to feature a forum for meaningful representation and consideration. This claim motivates a distinction between practices that should be termed "mutually advantageous exploitation" and those that should be termed "environmental coalition development." We need to ask ourselves whether we should continue to tolerate mutually advantageous exploitation and how we can increase the number of practices that develop coalitions.

1. Introduction

Indian Country Today reports that the 2009 Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference, sponsored by the International Ecotourism Society, featured "Indigenous People and Local Communities" as one of its four themes (Tammemagi 2009). Most of the discussions at the conference focused on how to define environmental tourism practices and how to create appropriate guidelines and implementation strategies. The report causes me, as an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, to wonder about how matters of environmental justice (EJ) were reflected on by the conference participants. I write this essay to defend some norms that should be part of the EJ framework we use to evaluate tourism practices in communities like ours, especially when the practices are motivated by the interests of tourists and tourism operators from outside our communities.

In this essay, "environmental tourism" refers to any tourism practice the purpose of which is to engage directly with some aspect of a local community's relationship to its environment. Environmental relationships may be understood economically, like in poverty tourism, or in terms of environmental

quality, like in toxic tourism, or in terms of ecological sustainability, like in ecotourism. The environments that serve as tourism sites may include, but are not limited to, urban areas, communities situated near ecologically hazardous technologies, and indigenous lands far away from the areas occupied by newcomers. Environmental tourism is a growing practice. Its growth provides a compelling reason to clarify the EJ framework for evaluating it from the standpoint of the affected community members.

The norms that usually play a role in any EJ framework and that are among the most commonly discussed regarding environmental tourism are “fair compensation” and “participative justice.” In section two, I outline these norms and highlight some of the specific requirements for environmental tourism practices that flow from them. In section three, I analyze Robert Figueroa’s claim that EJ also includes “recognition justice.” Based on my analysis of Figueroa, I argue that a norm of “direct participation” should be appealed to along with the norms of “fair compensation” and “participative justice.” I describe some of the requirements that flow from this norm using Figueroa’s concepts of “environmental identity” and “environmental heritage.”

In section four, I argue that many environmental tourism practices violate “direct participation” because tourism operators and tourists do not make good faith efforts to provide a forum in which the social circumstances and cultural terms of community members can be fairly represented and considered. I conclude that many environmental tourism practices fulfill the requirements of “fair compensation” and “participative justice,” but violate “direct participation.” These practices are best characterized as “mutually advantageous exploitation” because they fulfill the requirements that flow from the first two norms but violate or ignore the third. Today, there are some environmental tourism practices the goal of which is to satisfy the requirements of all three norms. These practices are best characterized as “environmental coalition development.” I finish by arguing for why awareness of the distinction between the two practices is an integral step toward establishing the EJ that communities like ours deserve.

2. Fair Compensation and Participative Justice

Environmental tourism practices affect our family members and friends and impact the social and ecological relationships in the communities where we live, work, and play. With so much at stake, it is imperative to reflect on what norms should be included in the environmental justice (EJ) framework we use to evaluate environmental tourism practices that take place in our communities. EJ has to do with environmental equity, that is, whether actions that impact the environment are carried out fairly for all affected parties. A framework is a set of norms that can be used to evaluate the fairness of environmental actions. I am interested in what norms are appropriate for an EJ framework for environmental tourism practices.

What norms should environmental tourism practices abide by when they stand to affect us and our fellow community members? “Fair compensation” and “participative justice” are among the most appropriate norms of environmental justice for environmental tourism practices (Shrader-Frechette 2002; Schlosberg 2009; Higham 2007; Butler and Hinch 2007; Ryan and Aicken 2005; Johnston 2006). “Fair compensation” requires that environmental tourism practices generate fair exchanges of goods, bads, and risks; “participative justice” requires that all agents who stand to benefit or be harmed have the opportunity to give their informed consent. In what follows, I will outline basic definitions of these norms and some of the specific requirements that flow from them.

Starting with fair compensation, the imperative “that compensation be fair” applies to how our transactions with tourists and tourism operators generate redistributions of goods, bads, and risks like materials, knowledge, services, opportunities, and experiences. I will refer to these redistributions generally as “compensation schemes.” The following questions express some significant concerns about the fairness of compensation schemes. How much financial compensation is enough in exchange for some local knowledge of sustainable techniques? Is the time taken to show tourists the extent of contamination better spent participating in community organization and litigation efforts? Should tourists pay the community members or a non-governmental organization working in the region? Is allowing tourists to look at community poverty worthwhile with regard to the prospect of alleviating poverty at some point in the future? Each of these questions expresses a concern about whether the tradeoffs of particular compensation schemes are really worth accepting as fair from the standpoint of community members.

To ensure that tradeoffs are worth accepting as fair, some of the specific requirements we would expect tourists and tourism organizations to abide by are *quid pro quos*, like that tourists have an obligation to compensate community members. Other specific requirements may be termed “teleological” insofar we require environmental tourism practices to promote the reduction of poverty, the removal or clean-up of environmental hazards, ecological protection, and the like. We also require that tourists avoid morally questionable acts of voyeurism: their purposes have to be genuine, transparent, and non-malicious, and they should not intend to view inappropriate aspects of our lives (Selinger 2009). There are certainly more requirements that flow from fair compensation. This outline is intended only to give a general treatment of the sorts of requirements that are commonly acknowledged and widely accepted in the field of EJ (Young 1990; Newton 2009).

Different from fair compensation, the norm of participative justice requires that all agents who may benefit or be harmed by the outcomes of institutional proceedings and social transactions have the opportunity to veto or formally accept the risks. What this means is succinctly put by Kristin Shrader-Frechette as “equal rights to self-determination in societal decision-making” (2002, 24). When the outcomes of a societal transaction promise new arrangements of

benefits and harms for a community, then it is illegitimate for the risks to be imposed until the community members have exercised their right to determine whether to assume them. Self-determination refers to our power to accept or veto proposals that may put us at risk based on criteria that matter to us.

Participative justice is well entrenched in social movements for environmental justice. The fifth principle of the 1992 National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit affirms the right to self-determination of all people, and the seventh principle affirms the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making (Newton 2009; Shrader-Frechette 2002). Implicit is the idea that when community members consent to a compensation scheme that we do so when we feel we are “informed enough” and “compensated enough” (Shrader-Frechette 2002, 28).

Some of the specific requirements that flow from participative justice are that we should be given the opportunity to consent to the practices without being subject to conditions of coercion, duress, and fraud. We also have a right to know, which means that the nature and scope of the practices, their potential consequences, and the relevant tradeoffs must be disclosed. We should also be guaranteed the right to veto the practices so that we know that our consent is a necessary condition for environmental tourism practices. There also must be a protocol of notification. On the basis of participative justice, tourism organizations must follow procedures that allow us to give our informed consent to their contracts, proposals, and activities.

The norms of fair compensation and participative justice are not morally scandalous by anyone’s lights—and a theory of environmental justice that excludes them provides an inadequate basis for us to evaluate environmental tourism practices. We absolutely could not endorse environmental tourism practices that, for example, ignore compensation, or tourism operators who fail to disclose all the features of their practices. Of course, within the literature on various environmental tourism practices, from ecotourism to poverty tourism, there are discussions about what defensible requirements for securing informed consent should be like, what compensation packages should be considered fair, what information should be disclosed, what purposes should be considered wrong, and so on. But in a more general sense, these widely accepted and discussed norms provide us with a substantial framework for evaluating environmental tourism practices in our communities.

3. Recognition Justice and Environmental Tourism

Robert Figueroa is the first philosopher to argue for the relevance of “recognition justice” for EJ. In this section I provide an account of how Figueroa connects “recognition justice” with EJ via the concepts of environmental identity and heritage. Through this discussion I develop a corresponding norm, which I refer to as “direct participation,” and enumerate some specific requirements that flow from it.

In some discussions in political philosophy, “recognition justice” concerns whether people’s “social circumstances” and “cultural terms” are “represented” and “considered” fairly within social institutions and transactions (Fraser 1997; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Taylor and Gutmann 1992; Schlosberg 2009). For the purposes of this essay, “social circumstances” refer to the various conditions of oppression and privilege that particular persons experience owing to the social status (or intersecting statuses) of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and disability; “cultural terms” refer to any of the specific identities, heritages, resources, standards, and understandings of important matters (like the meaning of “land,” “rights,” and the like) that every one of us has by virtue of having been raised within one or more cultures.

Social circumstances and cultural terms are unfairly “represented” when some people portray others inaccurately, in belittling ways, or through false impressions. Stereotypes in popular media are good examples. Often, members of a majority group have the privilege of being able to portray members of minority groups badly, and their privilege excuses them from being held accountable for it. It is unfair, or a recognition injustice, to have to live in a society where members of a majority get to impose on us their conceptions of who we are without being held accountable. There are no morally relevant reasons for most stereotypes, and they are likely to be psychologically and even physically harmful.

Social circumstances and cultural terms are unfairly “considered” when they are not duly weighed or appropriately emphasized or deemphasized within institutional proceedings and transactions among members of a society. Consider the example of a citizen who is a member of a minority group and whose cultural obligations require a period of absence from work that is deemed unusual by citizens belonging to the majority culture, the latter of whom are also the employers. It is unfair if, during the hiring process, there is either no chance to negotiate about how this difference should be handled sensitively or the majoritarian candidates are valued more because they are not under that cultural obligation. In this case, there are no morally relevant reasons for why some cultural obligations should not be given due consideration in hiring processes, especially in cases where lack of due consideration may promote unemployment and other harms.

At the core of representation and consideration is the idea that no one’s social circumstances and cultural terms—whether identity, beliefs, life patterns, and the like—should be privileged over another’s when there are no morally relevant reasons available that could justify the privilege. Recognition injustice can be defined as unjustified privilege in how social circumstances and cultural terms are represented and considered within social institutions and transactions.

Figueroa argues that recognition justice is relevant to EJ. In “Other Faces: Latinos and Environmental Justice,” Figueroa (2001) interprets a set of case studies as involving recognition injustice, and not only unfair compensation

and participative injustice. One of these case studies is the Kettleman City mobilization for EJ. In the case study, *El Pueblo Para El Aire y El Agua Limpio*, a community organization formed in predominantly Latino Kettleman City, resisted a proposed waste incinerator. The rural, mostly Hispanic community members living in Kettleman City found out that there was a toxic waste dump in their backyards of which they were unaware and that a waste incinerator was being proposed to be built nearby. The community members were unaware of all that was going on because the legal procedures for notifying stakeholders sidestepped the fact that many community members spoke only Spanish (cultural terms) and that the town was isolated to a degree that precluded them from easily receiving news postings from the nearest newspaper (social circumstances).

At one level, the resistance had to do with fairness in the allocation of goods and bads insofar as the same community already hosted a dump (Cole and Foster 2001). Both a dump and incinerator in a small town is morally suspicious and worthy of serious investigation. It also had to do with participative justice insofar as the community members did not have a formal opportunity to consent to or veto the dump or the proposed incinerator. Figueroa interprets the resistance as also having an element of recognition justice: the community members struggled for fair recognition of their social circumstances and cultural terms. In the case, the community members demanded that the relevant documents and public hearings be in Spanish and that guidelines of public notification account for the particular vulnerabilities associated with their community's marginalization.¹ It was a fight for recognition of what requirements should be satisfied for the community members' participation to be meaningful according to their social circumstances and cultural terms.

Figueroa writes that when we fail to pay attention to "cultural recognition and direct participation, environmental discrimination and discriminatory environmentalism are not successfully ameliorated" (2001, 183). I interpret Figueroa's use of the terms "direct participation" and "cultural recognition" as referring to participation that meaningfully represents and considers everyone's social circumstances and cultural terms. When such participation is operational in social institutions and transactions, discrimination is avoided successfully. I will refer to the norm of fair representation and consideration of social circumstances and cultural terms as the norm of "direct participation and cultural recognition," or, put succinctly, the norm of "direct participation." The norm of "direct participation" demands that social circumstances and cultural terms be fairly represented and appropriately considered. The norm stands on its own in relation to participative justice because the kind of discrimination

1. Cole and Foster (2001) emphasize how the procedures of notification were manipulable by the corporation responsible for the technologies. The reasons for this manipulability were the particular ways in which Kettleman City residents were marginalized.

the former avoids is different from that which is avoided by the latter, which I will justify in what follows.

“Direct participation” differs from the opportunity for informed consent. Consider the example of the social transactions that occur over a contract of some sort. It is one thing for us to receive a contract and to consent and sign off on it without being coerced or under duress; it is entirely another thing to have a forum of direct participation in which we can play an active role in determining how our social circumstances and cultural terms are expressed in the aspects of the contract that may affect them. A forum ensures that we are involved in many of the social transactions surrounding the creation of the contract; an opportunity to consent only guarantees us the chance to sign off on or veto a contract the language of which was developed by someone else without any integration of our social circumstances and cultural terms as dictated by our own voices. Our consenting to some proposed contract does not mean that any of us acted within a forum of direct participation that allowed us to express our “own takes” on the contract. In this sense, a “forum of direct participation” refers to a set of circumstances or conditions that do not preempt or deny our capacity to integrate our own social circumstances and cultural terms using our own voices. Decision-making procedures that do not include a forum for direct participation are suspicious from a moral point of view. When there is no direct participation, then we should be compelled to wonder *why* the other parties have not questioned its absence.²

EJ frameworks for evaluating environmental tourism should include norms of fair compensation, participative justice, *and* direct participation. There are at least two morally relevant reasons for including direct participation. First, unfair representations and considerations of our social circumstances and cultural terms can be harmful to our communities in a number of different ways. The norm of direct participation requires accountability on the part of tourism operators and tourists in ways that are not covered by the norm of participative justice. If tourists do not make efforts to establish forums, then there have to be good reasons that demonstrate that no harms will come.

The second reason is that we have a responsibility to protect the aspects of our relationship to our environmental that we wish to preserve for future community members. By allowing tourists and tourism operators to enter into our lives, we

2. It might be claimed that the norm of direct participation cannot be disentangled from fair compensation or participative justice. In other words, consenting to something while violating direct participation cannot count as informed consent. I concede that there are contexts where this is likely to be the case, especially in some medical contexts. However, in the context of environmental tourism, the conditions of informed consent can be established without providing a forum for direct participation, which I will show later in this essay. Before I do so, I first need to clarify some of the social and cultural differences that may be relevant to environmental tourism practices through Figueroa’s conceptions of “environmental identity” and “environmental heritage.”

have a responsibility to protect the significant aspects of our relationship to our environment. We need to ensure that tourists, tourism operators, and leaders or others are handling these matters correctly in our community. Figueroa's concepts of "environmental identity" and "environmental heritage" clarify some ways of understanding what the significant aspects are for indigenous and Latino communities in environmental tourism. He writes,

An environmental identity is the amalgamation of cultural identities, ways of life, and self-perceptions that are connected to a given group's physical environment. . . . Environmental identity is closely related to environmental heritage, where the meanings and symbols of the past frame values, practices, and places we wish to preserve for ourselves as *members of a community*. In other words, our environmental heritage is our environmental identity in relation to the community viewed over time. (2006, 371–72)

The concepts of environmental identity and heritage are important for indigenous community members, whether their communities are in urban centers, on indigenous lands, or in other environments. I want to consider why this is the case in environmental tourism using Figueroa's concepts of environmental identity and heritage.

Environmental tourism practices are for tourists to engage the environmental identities and heritages of some community, whether it is the ways of life developed in response to sustained poverty, or the sustainable ecological practices developed in a community's indigenous lands. The result of the engagement for the tourists may be some new degree of environmental or local knowledge (Weaver 2001, 105–06; Higgins-Desbiolles 2008, 347). Because environmental tourists want to be exposed to environmental identities and heritages, it is problematic when environmental tourism practices do not provide a forum for direct participation of the community members' perspectives on them. If environmental tourism practices are formed around environmental identities and heritages, shouldn't those who occupy those identities and inherit those heritages play a meaningful role in how they are conceived, construed, used, and so on? When environmental tourism practices do not do this, violating direct participation, then community members are denied a place as determiners and owners of their environmental identities and heritages. It is unfair to exclude people from defining identities and heritages that belong to them and are part of "who they are" in the strongest sense of the expression.

Violating or ignoring direct participation robs community members of the possibility to plan for the future in relation to the tourism practice. Heritage, as environmental identity over time, has an orientation toward the future and how communities collectively make plans. Our ability to plan for the future is based on what we can draw from our past and present. Our community predecessors left us with values and practices that they made the explicit decision to continue. When we inherit these practices, we decide what we wish to pass along, strengthen, or leave behind. Others, of course, may take these things

away from us, as in the case of a member of a dominant group, through colonial power mechanisms, dictating what aspects of our heritage we can actually decide to keep.

In the case of tourism and tourism operators from outside our communities, they are bearers of the heritage of dominant, privileged groups that are trying to interact with our heritage, mixing theirs with ours; as communities of less privilege, we have to ensure that our heritage is not fully overtaken by the heritages of the tourism operators and tourists. Having inherited the status of having to provide tourism services without any reciprocal return, we now have to figure out how to work with the tourists and their heritage in order to maintain the significant aspects of our heritage into the future. A forum of direct participation establishes a safe site for negotiation of these heritages.

Appropriate forums for direct participation must be “decision-driven.” That is, forums should pervade the decision-making processes that go into establishing and carrying out environmental tourism practices. The planning of the tour, the contracting, the actual tourism activities, and so on, must have sites of engagement that serve as these forums, which are sites or places where tourism operators and tourists are able to ensure that each step along the way they have engaged us in what they are doing, and we have the chance to respond according to our own social circumstances and cultural terms. It should never be, “Let’s think of a tourism idea and pitch it to the community members.” Rather, it should be, “How can we get everyone involved in participating at the various stages of establishing an environmental tourism practice?”

There are many good examples of possible forums of direct participation. It is important to remember that the development of such forums is itself a particular negotiation among the tourists, tourism operators, and community members. When members from outside a community desire to experience some aspect of its environmental identities and heritages, then, at the beginning, the tourism operators should endeavor to set up lines of communication with community leaders and individual members. The goal of this is to subject the tourism practice to revision from our voices. Other examples are relevant during the tour itself. There should be many situations during the tour where tourists get to interact with community members in ways where it is safe for the tourists to communicate to the community members and for the community members to respond.

Each of these examples should meet the following specific requirements. First, we should demand the meaningful expression of our social circumstances and cultural terms in how the compensation schemes are determined. Consider a hypothetical toxic tour of an indigenous community located nearby two Superfund sites. The tourism company’s purpose is to provide education on environmental injustice. It has drawn up a contract where an amount of litigation funds will be distributed to a non-profit legal services organization, one that generally works on indigenous cases and already has a working relationship with the community, in exchange for the opportunity to see the environmental

degradation experienced by the community members. The tourism organization provides the community representatives the opportunity to consent to or veto the contract depending on how attractive the terms are to them. The leaders understand the benefits of the infusion of litigation funds; however, based on their experience of being in litigation for over twenty years, they feel that their current funds are sufficient for continuing the legal struggle. What they desire is that the tourism fees go directly to hiring indigenous and non-indigenous toxicologists in order to determine how community members can restore their traditional diets and how the health of elders can be taken care of better. Based on how the contract was written up and presented to the representatives, they did not provide a forum for the representatives to safely and reasonably offer counter-terms based on their experiential expertise and cultural differences. The organizers assumed that the same tradeoffs that were attractive to them were attractive to the others and did not realize that the indigenous community members, through their environmental identity and heritage developed through years of litigation and political negotiation, thought differently about it. The very frame of reference for tradeoffs was different. No forum for direct participation was established in this hypothetical case.

Second, we should demand that open forums exist to express our differences on how the tourism practices are conducted based on our environmental identities and heritages. In some environmental and cultural heritage tours in North America, for example, the indigenous community members see the tourists as invaders (Lew and Van Otten 1998). In terms of their environmental identity and heritage, the tourists really are invaders; of course, this cannot be said in the course of the tour, and the tour cannot feature direct confrontation with the facts of the invasion. Most environmental tourists do not want to consider themselves as invaders, and would not go on the tour if they were referred to as such. Many “invaders” do not believe that they are invading anyone, or they are committed to ideals that what they are doing actually benefits the people who they are invading. Perhaps the members of the indigenous community believe that it is better for the tourists to engage with the fact that they are invaders, and come to terms with it, instead of avoiding it. Perhaps their opinion is that their environmental identities and heritages, which issue in cultural traditions and sustainable practices, should be expressed in terms of the invasion, a colonial tradition of which today’s tourists are only a recent instantiation. Tourists that would not go on an environmental tour at the first sound that they are invaders certainly do not endorse direct participation. This is even the case in rare scenarios where the community members have misidentified and wrongly judged the tourists. Even though they are wrong, there is no way that the tourists, left to their own devices, could know that they were even considered invaders, or know the environmental identities and heritages of the indigenous people in such a way as to show that they, the tourists, are not invaders.

They have to understand that what they anticipate is likely to be completely incorrect, not in a sense that is understandable to them before going, but in a sense that could only come out if there is a forum for the expression of difference. As I will mention in more detail below, some tourists believe that what they will find out is that people who are different from them are not conforming to the stereotypes. Yet the reality is that the people being toured think differently about the tourists, in ways with which the tourists do not want to come to terms. We should not let tourists tell us who we are without the opportunity to dialogue with them on this.

This requirement demands serious reflection. Tourism operators may present us with practices that we can see, just from how they are outlined, will allow no possibility for meaningful interaction with the tourists. This means that tourists will come bearing their heritage, which they use as the sole basis for interpreting what they see on our lands and in our communities. A forum of direct participation would allow us to point out these aspects to the tourism operators, or other parties, and figure out how to strike a better balance between our heritage and that of the tourists.

A third demand is that the discourses used to discuss environmental tourism in the public sphere express direct participation. Consider a recent article in *Newsweek* that discusses the increase in poverty tourism. The author describes the testimony of Professor Kevin Outterson, writing that

Most tourists scrupulously avoid grubby alleys in foreign cities where they might brush past gun-toting drug lords, but Kevin Outterson, a law professor at Boston University, actually paid to do it. It was precisely the kind of experience that drew him to Brazil's *favelas*, or slums. Outterson is part of a small but growing band of tourists who prefer to skip traditional hot spots and visit squalor instead. "It's not Disneyland," Outterson says. He's also visited junkyards in Cairo and in Mazatlán, Mexico, where he cooked lunch for local trash collectors. Such excursions into the world's poorest pockets can cause stereotypes to fizzle; Outterson found the favela dwellers to be industrious—not "desperate and crushed" as one might expect. (Popescu 2007)

The irony of how Outterson's testimony has been cut up and represented in this article is that there is no consideration that it is not only about what he thinks about people who live in *favelas*, or that it took so much effort to learn what should have been common sense (that they are not "desperate and crushed"), but that it was also about what these people thought about Outterson, and that maybe Outterson was demonstrating to these people that bourgeoisie Americans are not naïve about their privilege, lazy, racist, classist, desperate to see poverty, and lacking in consideration for treating others with respect. The article does not mention this at all. It represents a one-sided discourse that does not consider what the community members think nor engage the ignorance of some of the tourists' expectations. The writer violates direct participation by not

portraying poverty tourism meaningfully from the standpoint of all involved parties or in a way that respects their social circumstances and cultural terms.³

These are requirements that, if fulfilled, will render environmental tourism practices consistent with direct participation. Tourists and tourism operators who do not want us to participate in designing and determining the practices based on our social circumstances and cultural terms, or that ignore our opinions on how the tourism practices should be conducted, or that feature discursive deconstructions that exclude our side of the story, violate this norm. These requirements are distinct from the other requirements that we should make regarding compensation and participative justice, and should go alongside them. One way of illustrating this is that the other norms can be fulfilled without fulfilling it.

Consider a hypothetical environmental tourism practice. A group of tourists, based on their interests and conceptions of poverty alleviation, desire to experience poverty as it is lived; that is to say, they want to experience the environmental identities and heritages formed as a result of living through poverty. For these tourists, this means that they want to observe how the members of a community live as if the tourists were not really there, which seems to them to be the best way of gaining the desired experience. The good thing about these tourists is that they are reflective and do not want to colonize or harm the local community members. They pay a non-profit organization as part of their tourism fees, they are assured by their guides that the latter have strong relationships with the people being watched, and have had it vouched for by the non-profit organization that the people being watched gave their informed consent. It could be argued that the demands of the local community members for fair compensation and participative justice are met—and they are.

Despite their having consented, the local community members find it rather bizarre that privileged tourists want to learn about poverty by simply observing how they are living in their communities. If the tourists want to experience poverty, it makes more sense that they should discuss it with the community members and help to participate in the work of the local communities, as well as entertain some of the community members' ideas for how to improve their situation. It just did not make sense to the community members how a group of tourists who claim to have never experienced poverty would somehow—perhaps magically—know the best way to experience a glimpse of poverty, which seemed to go against common sense. The local community members were also curious about whether these tourists were as ignorant and selfish as

3. Representations in the media are not matters where forums can be set up in the senses previously discussed. However, media representations do promote norms about how practices should be evaluated. When the media ignores differences in social circumstances and cultural terms, then those media promote the idea that direct participation is irrelevant.

they had heard was the case with people from those national and privileged backgrounds.

But the guides told the community members that, if these concerns were expressed to the tourists, that the latter would not understand, would feel insulted, and may seek to do business elsewhere. Frustrated, the community members consented anyway because they thought that it was not wrong to conform to the tourists' desires since at least they were being compensated and were consulted on it, no matter how illogical the tourists' ideas were. The result is that the environmental tour takes place, the tourists experience the ways of life of the community members who pretend they are not being observed, and the tourists leave, going back home to their ordinary lives. A few months later, the guide comes to the community and says that an article was published by one of the tourists, in which it is claimed that the people who were observed were taking on the challenge of their poverty, working in earnest, and hopeful for the future, whereas it was thought that, living in such conditions, they would be lazy and stubborn and spiteful. On reading this, the guide congratulated them on doing a good job, expressing hope that they would see some of the benefits provided by the non-profit working in the community.

After the guide left, the community members felt frustrated that maybe all that was achieved was what the article said was achieved. Why didn't the tourists want to engage further with them—the experts? One of the community members had wanted to ask the tourists why they were doing it in this way? In fact they thought it was strange that this particular non-profit was chosen, as opposed to one of the others that specifically worked with women and elders, which the community members thought were more vulnerable. The tourism organizers and tourists did not establish a forum for those being watched to participate directly. There is something wrong with this, even when fair compensation and participative justice are satisfied.

Many indigenous communities have given their consent to environmental tourism practices like this hypothetical one. There is no forum that has been established for meaningful participation and the expression of difference with regard to environmental identity and heritage. Environmental tourism practices that do not establish forums for direct participation are morally suspicious. In the next section, I will discuss how taking direct participation seriously leaves us with important questions about what tourism practices are permissible in our communities.

4. Mutually Advantageous Exploitation and Coalition Tourism

The opening gesture for evaluating environmental tourism practices should be to avoid euphemism: some tourists and tourism operators do not provide a forum for direct participation and, for this reason, should be understood as endorsing exploitative practices, no matter the intentions behind them or

whether we accept my understanding of the norm of direct participation.⁴ I want to be careful in what I mean by this. It does not matter whether someone accepts that the norm of direct participation is commensurate with fair compensation and participative justice. If somebody wonders whether they are engaging in privileged practices, then they will never be in the position to argue that they are not doing so until a forum for direct participation has been established. It does not mean that they are doing so, but they cannot claim one way or the other until an actual forum has been established.

As members of indigenous communities, we need to reflect about whether it is right for us to permit tourism practices that do not feature a forum of direct participation. Alternately, tourists and tourism operators should reflect on whether it is permissible for them to take part in environmental tourism that does not feature a forum for direct participation. These reflections are important because environmental tourism practices that do not provide such forums can still provide beneficial redistributions to the community members and opportunities to consent. What I want to clarify in this section is that environmental tourism practices can furnish beneficial redistributions and affirm participative justice while still being exploitative. Or environmental practices can provide beneficial redistributions and affirm participative justice and be nonexploitative.

Many environmental tourism practices should be referred to as what they are: “mutually advantageous exploitation.” A practice falls under “mutually advantageous exploitation” when it fulfills the demands of fair compensation and participatory justice but does not establish a forum for direct participation. Practices like this are mutually advantageous because everyone benefits in some way, from financial compensation to education. “Exploitation” may appear to be too strong a term. But by “exploitation,” I mean that some community members are being taken advantage of due to their being in circumstances that they cannot control. When community members accept redistribution schemes and consent to environmental tourism practices but are not provided a forum of direct participation, then there must be some explanation for why this is the case. It is certainly not because the practices fit into the cultural ways of life and environmental identities and heritages belonging to the community members as they see them. In many cases, ecotourism, poverty tourism, and toxic tourism are only *tolerable* by community members because of their unfortunate social circumstances, like being strapped with the need to protect ways of life, alleviate poverty, and so on. No matter what the tourists think they are doing or what the tourism operators’ values are, without the establishment of a forum for direct participation, the practice is straightforwardly mutually advantageous exploitation.

4. In EJ, there is a set of norms and conditions that recognize unintentional racism and unintentional injustices. See Figueroa (2008) and Figueroa and Mills (2000).

Consider some of the reasons why environmental tourism practices are exploitative. In some poverty tourism practices, the tourists get an opportunity to look at poor people according to their own conception of authentic poverty. The only reason why the members of the poverty stricken community consent or do not object to these practices is because they are poor and are in a position that makes it more likely that they might consider trading direct participation for financial and other incentives. The tourists are taking advantage of the community members' poverty in order not to have to deal with providing a forum of direct participation. In some ecotourism, no community members would take the time and effort to practice their ways of life, maintain the ecological integrity of their environment, *and also* teach these practices and maintenance protocols to tourists *according to* how the tourists want to be exposed to them. That is quite a burden to place on the participating community members. The only reason why they would be in this position is because factors and circumstances outside of their control have to be taken into consideration, like that the societies where the tourists originated from colonized the indigenous community and have continued to infringe on the environmental quality of their lands, which creates the need to do anything to protect their lands, even when it is highly burdensome.⁵

Should we openly resist any environmental tourism practices that are no better than mutually advantageous exploitation? Should tourists stand up against mutually advantageous exploitation? I cannot argue for my own answers in this essay; however, I think we are making a step in the right direction when we refer to mutually advantageous exploitation as such, and not try to suggest that such practices are otherwise, even when the intentions behind the practices are caring, love, concern for humanity, and the like. There are criteria for identifying these practices: (1) they meet any demands of fair compensation and participative justice, yet (2) there is no evidence that they feature a forum for direct participation.

For those who think that providing such a forum is not practical, it is helpful to contrast mutually advantageous exploitation with "environmental coalition development." A practice counts as "environmental coalition development" when it provides a forum for direct participation and also satisfies the norms of fair compensation and participative justice. EJ scholar and activist Giovanna di Chiro has documented many such environmental tourism practices. Writing

5. Of course, what if the sorts of practices that might appear to be mutually advantageous exploitation really do establish a forum for meaningful participation and the expression of difference? The way a poverty tour goes really is about what the poor people want, even though in other cases the poor people really would not want this. This simply means that the practice really is *not* mutually advantageous exploitation even though, based on other cases, it would appear on the surface to be so. This is often an issue that we have to think carefully about. It is a question of whether the forum has been set up or not, and not a question of what the outcomes of that forum having been established are.

specifically about reality and poverty tours, she claims that “community activists and reality tour leaders alike argue that the interests of the people suffering environmental injustice must be at the center of organizing efforts in the initial planning stages of a toxic tour” (2000, 297). Di Chiro is referring to practices that are, in part, initiated, designed, and shaped by the community members, where the understanding and function of environmental identities and heritages is co-constituted by all participants. These practices *do* provide a forum for direct participation, which in turn furnishes the conditions for coalition building, or “environmental coalition development.”

Providing forums for direct participation generates environmental tourism practices that do more than educate, reverse stereotypes, or transfer knowledge. Di Chiro writes that

Although they consume time and resources, for most community groups toxic tours are important political tools that help peel off the blinders that limit fuller understanding of the causes of environmental problems and their potential solutions. Moreover, they present to the visitors on the tour a sense of the anger and spirit that galvanize the people of the community and that push them to continue the fight for environmental justice. (2000, 297)

This “sense of anger and spirit” is only possible when the community members have the forum to express their perspectives on their environmental identities and heritages. This is distinct from the sorts of experiences, for example, discussed in the *Newsweek* article referred to in the previous section, which was about a tourist coming to terms with unreasonable prejudices, and nothing more than that. We can see that there is substance to direct participation because practices that feature it are so much different than mutually advantageous exploitation. The irony is that environmental coalition development likely means fewer tourists, interest, and funds. But environmental coalition development leads to transformation. Di Chiro claims that such practices “[impel] the tour-goer not to preserve the reality they are confronted with, but to transform it” (2000, 295). Transformation is one of the goals of the EJ movement, which Figueroa has also argued for, writing that “environmental identities, from communities of color . . . *do* have transformative power to meet the rethinking environmental justice demands of political, cultural, and environmental assumptions” (2001, 183). While transformation is a concept that requires more than can be covered in this paper, I want to suggest it as a possible goal of environmental tourism practices that include forums of direct participation and a scholarly topic worth further consideration (Figueroa and Waite 2007, 2008).

5. Conclusion

The argument in this paper is intended to help us reflect on what norms we should include in the EJ framework we use to evaluate environmental tourism practices in communities like ours. I argued that a norm of direct participation belongs in this framework along with fair compensation and participative

justice. Tourism practices the tourists and operators of which do not make any good faith efforts to fulfill direct participation are morally suspicious. We also have at least two good reasons to invoke direct participation, namely that violations of the norm can be harmful and that our environmental identities and heritages are at stake when environmental tourism practices come to our communities. We should also be aware that tourism practices that respect fair compensation and participative justice but not direct participation may be permissible, but, at best, they are examples of mutually advantageous exploitation. Mutually advantageous exploitative practices should only be considered permissible if we can provide good reasons why the potential harms and impacts on our identities and heritage are manageable. Recently, many environmental tourism practices are beginning to respect all three norms and, for this reason, contribute to establishing coalitions among the tourists, tourism operators, and community members. Environmental coalition development is a choiceworthy ideal and one that should be initially promoted before having to settle for mutually advantageous exploitation.

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