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'Journeying into the Lives of Others': A Critical Analysis of Ethnography, Tourism and Tourists

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Abstract

This paper reflects upon the role of ethnography in tourism research: its conceptualization and epistemological implications, as well as the practical problems associated with work in the field. The application of ethnography to the study of tourism has often been invoked - in the context of a wider qualitative strategy of inquiry - yet at the same time it remains a relatively under-employed methodology. This may be partly due to the confusion that often reigns with regard to what precisely constitutes an ethnographic study, as well as perhaps the difficulties encountered in doing ethnographies of mobile peoples. This paper evaluates the scope of ethnographic methods in tourism studies and the challenges presented by the deployment of such a methodology in tourism. In particular, it interrogates the degree to which tourism ethnographies have dealt with questions of [narrative] authority, reflexivity and inter-subjectivity with regard to representing and giving voice to the points of view of those being studied. In conclusion, it draws attention to the many potential applications of ethnography in tourism, not least the ability to give voice to the meaningful experiences of tourists, hosts and an array of other actors in the worlds of tourism, as well as its emphasis on the fullest possible immersion into the specific context(s) being studied, as the basis of developing in-depth, longitudinal ethnographies of touristic phenomena.

Introduction

The evolution of tourism scholarship can be attributed in no small part to the nature of the historical evolution of tourism research which grew out of a disparate range of disciplinary fields: anthropology (MacCannell, 1992; Nash, 1996; Smith 1977/1989), sociology (Cohen, 1988; Urry, 1990), geography (Christaller, 1963; Pearce, 1989), and, more recently, cultural studies/geography (Britton, 199l; Crouch and Lubbren, 2003; Church and Coles, 2006), politics (Richter, 1989; Hall, 1994), political economy (Britton, 1982, Clancy, 2001; Dieke, 2000)**,** social psychology (Pearce *et al*. 1996), and ethics and philosophy (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Fennell, 2006), all injecting a valuable source of theoretical dynamism into the study of tourism. Rather than acting as a constraint, this diverse intellectual heritage has served to enrich our understanding of an enormously diverse phenomenon, as scholars in tourism have wandered across disciplinary boundaries.

However, despite the theoretical advances in tourism scholarship, thanks to the widening scope of journals in this area and its recognition as a 'legitimate' area of social inquiry by the International Sociological Association,[1] there is ample room to extend our theoretical and empirical understanding of tourism even further. Although, it is ironic that at precisely the time when tourism features regularly in the thematic content of many social scientific conferences, many contemporary ethnographic

[1] The Working Group on the Sociology of International Tourism was created by a group of respected tourism sociologists in Madrid in 1990. In 1994, the Working Group was fully incorporated into the ISA as Research Committee 50 on International Tourism, and has since organised a number of successful scientific sessions and international symposia in this field.

monographs still omit any reference to tourism, despite its insertion into even the remotest corners of the planet (Bruner, 2005: 8). With regard to the paucity of *ethnographic* research into tourism, Goodson and Phillimore (2004: 39-40) echo one of the central concerns of this paper:

Tourism is a complex phenomenon based on interrelations and interactions, but the tendency of tourism research has been to focus on the tangible, and arguably the 'objective' and readily measurable interrelationships and interdependencies between people and places, frequently from an economics marketing and/ or management perspective. A more person-focused approach which takes into account the individual's subjective experiences and perceptions and the roles these play in constructing the tourist, or indeed host, experience has received scant attention.

With this in mind, this paper attempts to reflect upon and elucidate the conceptual and practical components of applying an ethnographic method within the context of tourism research. References and illustrations are drawn from the work of the authors in the areas of tourism behavior and tourism development. The discussion identifies the primary tenets of ethnography, or indeed those tenets which contemporary ethnographic enquiry should actively consider: 'interpretive analysis', 'critical ethnographic appraisal' and 'subjective assessment'. In turn, it seeks to clarify the principle components of ethnography with particular regard to its role - existing and potential - in the production of rich and innovative accounts of tourism phenomena. Such applications include: longitudinal study, participant observation, observational

techniques, longitudinal study and reflexive evaluations. Before proceeding to examine both the historical and contemporary development of ethnographic techniques in tourism, it is appropriate to provide a brief summary of what is meant by 'ethnography'.

The Evolution of Ethnographic Inquiry

At a rather simplistic level, ethnography is a descriptive account of the way of life of a particular society or group of people and/or selected aspects of that society. However, in practical terms, ethnography transcends a literally descriptive approach to one which analytically interprets the phenomena studied in a manner which is as faithful as possible to peoples' experiences, perceptions, narratives of their everyday lives (cf. Boyle, 1994), and in particular the self-definitions made by members of the community or group being studied (Evans, 1988). At the same time ethnographic methods are sufficiently flexible and open-ended to be able to account for possible inconsistencies and conflicts of opinions. Ethnographic research may involve several research techniques, usually based on qualitative methods of investigation: 'friendly' (casual) conversations with various members of the public; unstructured and informal interviews with particular community 'representatives' (formal and informal); serial interviews (including life histories) based on informal dialogue with key informants over a significant time period; participatory techniques developed through active involvement in the affairs of the community, whether in terms of participating in key organizational-type roles or being involved in more generalized everyday activities; and

observational techniques, which involve the witnessing of peoples' behaviour patterns and monitoring of conversational gatherings. A holistic approach to ethnographic research would involve a combination of some of these methods of investigation, with the intention of producing 'strips' of information (Agar, 1986:28) which can then be pieced together to assemble a more coherent depiction or narrative of the phenomenon being studied.

The origins of ethnography are commonly associated with the European colonialization of 'primitive' non-Western societies and the study of these areas via the systematic collection of data by professional anthropologists in the field. However, rich and varied accounts of human cultures and societies are apparent in the writings of Arab, Chinese and Indian explorers and scholars (Khair *et al.* 2005), most notably Ibn Battuta and Zhou Dagan. Ethnographically rich accounts of different societies and their customs are found in the travel journals of early European traders such as Marco Polo (Hill and Hitchcock, 1996), as well as European colonists, missionaries and Victorian travelers in Africa and America (Harris, 1968; Pratt, 1986). The interest shown by anthropologists in the study of race and slavery was encouraged by the concerns of British governments and private groups to advance their political and economic control of Africa and the Caribbean (Stauder, 1980). Nevertheless such early written accounts of 'non-Western' societies are differentiated from the practice of contemporary ethnography. The conditions under which such observations were created and the moral and political stance of the observer were rarely revealed (Galani-Moutafi, 2000: 207).

A more systematic and scientifically grounded approach to the collection and analysis of ethnographic data, informed by specific sets of anthropological concepts and theories, emerged during the period of European expansionism and the establishment of colonial rule (in particular British) from the early eighteenth century until the second half of the twentieth century (Hill and Hitchcock, 1996). While the relationship between anthropologists and colonialism was far more complex than one of mere complicity on behalf of the former, often the very presence of white anthropologists in these societies was facilitated by the forces, which underpinned colonial domination as a whole.

The evolutionary anthropologists of the 19th century were concerned with the classification of human societies along an evolutionary sequence from primitive to modern, utilizing a mixture of historical and ethnographic data (Vidich and Lyman, 1994). The British anthropologist, Sir Edward Tylor (2006), traveled to Mexico and other non-industrial countries to carry out a series of ethnographic studies of 'ancient' and 'primitive' societies, and as a consequence he formulated theories concerned with explaining the key stages of social evolution such as the movement from polytheism to monotheism. Indeed evolutionary theories formed the backdrop against which 19th century travelers documented the customs and traditions of various rural societies, even in more familiar environs of Southern Europe (Brettell, 1986). Waldren (1996) also notes how the writings and ethnographic collections of the 19th century aristocrat and traveler, the Archduke Luis Salvador, still constitute a valuable catalogue

of resources from the study of Mallorquin natural, social and archaeological history.

Thus the scientific basis of anthropological fieldwork was founded upon the detailed and systematic study of cultures that were seen to be 'primitive' and representative of an earlier phase of human evolution. Indeed Tylor's (1958) study of cultural evolution was based on cross-country comparisons of statistical data of kinship and marriage patterns. However, there was a movement towards the analysis of cross-cultural (rather than cross-country) data. This development was pioneered by the work of Boas (1982, 1987), who engaged in a comparative study of North American Indian groups. His work was concerned with the mythological components and structures of native societies. The importance of particularistic-based ethnographies in the study of other cultures was emphasized by those such as Malinowski (1978) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952), both insisting upon the primacy of concrete empirical investigation operationalized through the ethnographic application of participant observation (Harris, 1968). Malinowski (1978), for instance, stressed that in an attempt to attain an indigenous perspective researchers should isolate themselves from people of similar ethnic background, placing themselves in direct contact with the observed culture. However, it has been argued that the above ethnographic approaches operated within a scientific paradigm of objective attachment, thus producing overly descriptive and non-critical accounts of the observed phenomena (Ellen, 1984; Kirk and Miller, 1986). Yet the advocacies of Boas, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown stressed the importance of studying specific cultures in their own right; with their own set of customs, beliefs and ideologies. This ethnographic perspective, often referred to as 'cultural relativism', represented a progressive challenge to the evolutionary perspectives of cultures and societies.

Despite the positivism of early anthropological-based fieldwork programmes, particularly the emphasis on detached, neutral observation as a means of constructing detailed and objective ethnographic monographs of 'primitive societies' based on directly observable traits, they introduced the notion of the researcher as a research tool which became the center-piece of contemporary ethnographic research. Although there has been disagreement concerning the distinctive features of ethnography, ranging from a descriptive tool of social life to that of a philosophical paradigm (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994), it can perhaps be best described as a social research technique defined by an interpretive approach to the analysis of society. This is neatly summarized by Hollinshead as, 'the behavioral, institutional, and processual context of a society, as seen from the actor's point of view' (1991: 654).

'Classical' works of anthropological and indeed sociological field research often placed disproportionate emphasis on 'marginal' areas, peoples, and/or social groups at least until the 1950s. This is perhaps unsurprising given that it was often thought to be easier – in some cases, rightly so - to gain access to and study such communities (Evans, 1988). Nevertheless, as ethnography shifted towards urban areas in industrialized societies, even here, access to so-called 'marginalized peoples' was complicated by other factors such as the

constantly shifting population due to migration and resentment towards [middle-class] anthropologists (cf Graburn 2002: 23)[2], wittily described by William Foot Whyte (1981) during his first encounter with the 'locals'. This however ran the risk of reinforcing the perception or indeed pre-determining the status of such phenomena as 'peripheral' or 'less powerful' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994: 486). To some extent, this characterized much of the work associated with the Chicago School of Sociology, which applied anthropological techniques to the study of various 'marginalized subcultures' in the city of Chicago. This institution emerged from the 1920s through the influence of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, who promoted a programme of research into urban life and culture. The Chicago School emphasized the importance of observing individuals and groups in their natural habitat by recording their life-histories and watching daily events (Bulmer, 1984). It stressed that the most effective research strategy was to actively participate in the lives of others, especially in an endeavour to report on critical incidents and highlight significant concerns affecting daily lifestyles and personal circumstances. One of the main achievements of the Chicago School was the production of specialized studies on those classified as the 'underside of society' (Silverman, 1985:19) (e.g., street gangs and homeless persons). The school also focused on minority groups living in particular segregated areas of the city (e.g., Polish immigrants and African Americans) (Drake and Cayton, 1975). Despite an over-emphasis on the less privileged members of society, at the expense of the 'voices of the powerful', the Chicago School set comprehensive ethnographic guidelines concerning the application of observational and participatory techniques to the study of diverse social phenomena.

Yet the prevailing ethnographic attention directed to the study of marginal people could not escape the accusation that it was underpinned by both explicit and implicit concerns to 'develop/civilize' or 'liberate/emancipate' such groups. Implicit ideological tendencies were accompanied by further limitations, in particular, a concern with small-scale communities seen in isolation from wider societal forces. For instance, work carried out on 'isolated peasant villages' in southern Europe, conducted by the 'Mediterraneanist' scholars during the 1950s and 1960s, had a tendency to 'tribalize' rural societies. This was conspicuous in their failure to consider key social variables internal to those societies, including class consciousness and social conflict (Gilmore, 1976). Although researchers arguably have a responsibility to unearth the perspectives and concerns of marginalized communities, it is the central concern of this paper to explore ways in which (tourism) researchers can be sensitive to the wider influence of economic and political processes on the everyday lives of individuals and communities.

2 : The authors are grateful to Nelson Graburn for providing a copy of Campbell's (1988) paper as well as for drawing attention to a number of ethnographic studies of tourism in Asia.

The Contribution of Ethnography to the Study of Tourism Development

Notwithstanding the legacy of the Chicago School in terms of its attempt to move social inquiry into the urban domain, many of the early anthropological and sociological studies of tourism continued the tradition of studying in locations peripheral to the large metropolitan centers. For the most part these studies adopted an empathetic rather than a paternal approach to the study group in question, in this instance the 'host communities'; a normative outlook, which stands in contrast to the previous generation of anthropologists (e.g., Malinowski and Boas). This was partly due to the fact that during the 1950s and 1960s international tourism had begun to take root in the former colonial dominions and other parts of the 'Third World' precisely because they were perceived to be 'isolated' and 'exotic' by early travelers and tourists. The conclusions arrived at by a number of scholars (e.g., Britton, 1982; Turner and Ash, 1975; Erisman, 1983) thus embodied a shift in consciousness which owed much to the emergence of dependency theories and related critical literature on tourism which 'challenged the identification of modernity with development' (Wood, 1993: 54). Appropriately, both Crick (1985) and Leiper (1993) have warned against researchers being overly emotional in their inquiries concerning the negative problems associated with tourist behaviour patterns. Crick (1985), for instance, criticized those such as Turner and Ash (1975:129) for describing tourists as 'barbaric'. While Crick accepts that 'creative literature is rife with clichés about the vulgarity of tourism', he warns that:

...much anthropological and sociological work has the same feel to it, so that one does not really know whether one is reading social science or confessions of emotional antipathy (1985: 77).

The earliest acknowledged ethnographic-based studies of tourism development can be traced back to the early 1960s (Nuñez, 1963), and in particular to a variety of studies dedicated to unearthing the effects of tourism on host societies published in the 1970s (Redclift, 1973; Greenwood, 1976; Smith, 1977). These studies have largely concentrated on how the interaction between tourists and locals reflects an element of naive generosity towards the existing solidarity among community members. Accordingly, some researchers concluded that tourism has resulted in the increasing atomization of the host society, manifest in competition and conflict amongst local people (Redclift, 1973), the declining centrality of the family as the hub of social and economic life (Stott, 1978), the demise of traditional forms of hospitality (Zarkia, 1996), and the substitution of the 'cash nexus' for the 'moral nexus' of existing community relations (Forster, 1964). These changes also of course manifest themselves in a more positive light with regard to the growing independence of women and their participation in the wider economy as [tourism] entrepreneurs (cf. Stott, 1978; Moore, 1995; Zarkia, 1996; Scott, 1997).

The predominant concerns of many early studies centered on the effects of cultural contact between tourists and hosts, and in particular the potent effects of tourism on cultural change in so-called 'native' or 'less developed' societies (Smith, 1977/1989). Thus early studies of tourism's impact tended to

focus solely on the interaction between these two groups conceived entirely within the physical confines of the destination itself, and envisaged as a culturally bounded unit of society, with little or no reference to the broader social, economic and political environment. Indeed Greenwood's (1976, 1977) observations of tourism in Fuenterrabia (Basque Country), while reflecting on how the de-stabilizing forces of tourism have undermined cultural traditions and the older ties of relations of reciprocity of a peasant community via the hands of 'outside investors' (1976: 135), famously underestimated the influence of local power structures in the construction of cultural meaning and contestation of commemorative performances (see Wilson, 1993; Linstroth, 2002). He himself later acknowledged this error, stating that 'moral anguish was easier to express' (Greenwood, 1989: 183).

Nash (1981) was one of the first to highlight the 'parochialism' of anthropologists who exhibited a 'knee-jerk' condemnation in reaction to the 'imposition' of tourism on the distant societies and communities of the less developed world which they are so fond of studying. Often the more pessimistic conclusions were implicit generalizations based on extreme cases of the destructive effects of tourism. These were usually based on observations of mass tourism development in such places as the Caribbean, where existing inequalities and undemocratic governments exacerbated the powerlessness of inhabitants to voice their concerns about the detrimental social costs of tourism (cf. Turner and Ash, 1975; Hiller, 1976). Moreover, their condemnation of international tourism made little attempt to distinguish between different modes of tourism development, thus

concluding that tourism offered little or no hope for the inhabitants of tourism destination areas who are endlessly condemned to become degraded, commoditised and exploited for and by tourism. One of the principal lessons learnt from this has been the acknowledgement of the importance of incorporating some measure of circumspection with regard to the manner in which tourism transforms destination societies (cf. Wood, 1993). Specifically, this is where ethnographic accounts are best placed to incorporate 'local voices' into an analysis of the social changes engendered by tourism as well as the experiences of tourists themselves, as a number of more recent studies have sought to do (more on this below), and thus to avoid the representational disempowerment of those within the local setting as well as the tourists themselves.

Increasingly ambiguous and nuanced assessments regarding the relationship of tourism to host societies, often, but not always, based upon detailed ethnographic casework, did begin to emerge by the end of the 1970s (see Boissevain, 1977; Hermans, 1981). It could be argued that this was due to the shift in focus towards tourism in relatively 'developed' societies. At the same time, less condemnatory positions were also reached by those who had studied non-industrialized societies including McKean (1977) who claims that tourism led to the regeneration of indigenous culture in Bali, and Cohen (1979a), whose study of impact of tourism on hill-tribes in northern Thailand concludes that the extension of political control by lowland Thai elites and middle-men is of greater concern to locals than the developmental effects of tourism *per se*. In this respect, de Kadt (1979) argues that the effects of tourism on receiving societies cannot

be considered independently from the context of the indigenous social structure and wider political economy. Indeed the edited volume by de Kadt (1979) signaled a turning point, and heralded the arrival of a more critical body of research which is reflected in a shift which is both contextualized and better theorized. Moreover the development-oriented case studies were important in many respects, not least because they shifted the focus of inquiry into the domain of 'resort tourism', in contrast to the more culturally-oriented settings apparent in Smith's (1977, 1989) edited collections. Yet, although these studies revealed important insights into the relationship between tourism and a range of issues from planning and development, economic benefits, social welfare, and the effects of host-tourist interactions, few of the studies involved the application of in-depth ethnographic approaches based on longitudinal-based analyses. This was unfortunate given that these studies were, for the most part, carried out by anthropologists.

The development of tourism as a legitimate field of anthropological and sociological inquiry was also hindered at an early stage due to the initial reluctance of academic institutions and funding agencies to take such research seriously, as well as the reluctance of the researchers themselves to be seen to be involved in areas perceived to be either frivolous or exploitative (Nash, 1996). Indeed, Nuñez (1989) and others (Dann *et al.* 1988: 2) have pointed out that these initial forays into the anthropology of tourism were often incidental discoveries of tourism's effect on host societies by anthropologists working on more 'traditional' anthropological concerns related to cultural contact and change in areas

such as Malta (Boissevain, 1977) and the Basque Country (Greenwood, 1977), and Brazil (Kottak, 1983, cited in Garburn, 2002: 25). Galani-Moutafi argues that 'the ethnographies of the 20s and 30s share many similarities with travel writing' in so far as they could be seen as 'a story of adventure involved in travel' to faraway places (2000: 213). Alternatively, one could argue that insights of an ethnographic (observational) nature can also be found in certain types of travel literature (e.g., Least Heat-Moon, 1982; Lewis, 1984) and critical accounts from representatives of host societies (Kincaid, 1988).

Nonetheless, early tourism impact studies traditionally contained an intrinsic assumption that tourism is either 'destructive' or 'constructive' to host cultures, thus reinforcing the dominance of a Eurocentric, scientific epistemology which defines the criteria upon what constitutes 'good' / 'bad' development, and also, what is / is not considered to be of cultural value. Jafari (1990) has termed these perspectives, the tourism 'advocacy' and tourism 'cautionary' platforms respectively. Although the advocacy and cautionary platforms are ostensibly contrasting views of the value of tourism, they both invoke a rhetoric of 'salvage' which reflects the nineteenth century contrast between the reverence of nature and/or 'primitive cultures', accompanied by the desire to protect them from the onslaught of industrial society, and the wish to 'civilize' remote and backward societies (cf. Short, 1991) Social scientists have sought to contest the applications and distinctions between the two platforms identified (Wood, 1993; Lanfant, 1995), renouncing such instrumentalist interpretations of tourism's role in the cultural destruction or cultural enhancement of host

societies, for example, by asserting that tourism is integral to a general process of cultural (re)invention rather than a direct cause of social change (cf. Picard, 1995; Scott, 1995) This is not to suggest, however, that *all* early anthropological studies of tourism were framed within these perspectives, or indeed that the anthropology of tourism has been characterized by a linear progression from simplistic 'structuralist' generalizations to a more constructivist approach. Bruner (2005: 9), perhaps one of the most original and wide-ranging of anthropologists to cast his eye over an array of touristic phenomena, has generally adopted the view of culture as an emergent and contested phenomenon. In the following citation from a celebrated study on the interaction between the Maasai tribespeople of Kenya and tourism, this perspective is clearly illustrated:

The Maasai at Mayers Ranch make their living by performing the "noble savage" in a carefully and collaboratively constructed ethnographic present….Tourism gives tribalism and colonialism a new life by bringing them back as representations of themselves and circulating them within an economy of performance (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994:435).

Since the 1980s there has been a clear attempt to combine ethnographic and other strategies of predominantly qualitative inquiry at a local level in tourism development. Perhaps in response to his own recommendation that inquiries should be processual, contextual and emic, Cohen (1979a, 1982) led the way in attempting to develop a theoretically-informed examination of tourism development through a series of ethnographic investigations into

entrepreneurship and tourism enterprises in Thailand. Similar work has been carried out on the structure of tourism enterprise in Thailand (Wahnschafft, 1982), the Dominican Republic (Kermath and Thomas, 1992) and Greece (Loukissas, 1982; Tsartas, 1992), though often employing survey methods and quantitative forms of analyses rather than ethnography. Other more detailed ethnographic investigations into the local-level dynamics of tourism development have also revealed more complex patterns of adaptation and response, using a combination of ethnographic methods in conjunction with theoretical insights (e.g., van der Werff, 1980; Kousis, 1989; Kenna, 1993; Scott, 1995; Michaud, 1997; Bianchi, 1999). Even ethnographically-rich accounts such as Michaud's (1991) examination of the interface between ethnic identity, social stratification and tourism entrepreneurship in Ladakh, often rely quite heavily on pre-ordained categories of analysis in order to classify socio-economic activities related to tourism, in this case, the informal-formal sector model.

Nevertheless, many such studies have perhaps not detailed the range of host perspectives, in their *own* words, to the extent they could, as they tend to be written from the perspective of the observer. For example, Abram and Waldren's (1998) edited book, *Anthropological Perspectives on Local Development*, though initially acknowledging the importance of drawing on ethnographic interpretations of the views of different participants (or non-participants) in the local development process, does not fully deal with the implications of development from the perspective of those directly affected by the forces of changes described. The contributions which relate to

tourism, do provide rich and detailed first-hand accounts of local power struggles and their influence on shaping the outcomes of tourism development in Malta (Boissevain and Theuma, 1998) and Mallorca (Waldren, 1998). Yet in both cases, little or nothing is heard from the locals with regard to their own perceptions, understandings and attitudes towards these development issues. The inclusion of further in-depth accounts from the perspective of different residents and other participants in development processes, whether presented in the form of a monologue or a dialogue (or a combination of both), would help to expose the idiosyncratic views and concerns of a wider range of social groups and individuals affected by and involved in such processes within host societies. For instance, Boissevain and Theuma's (1998) claim, that local development should be measured according to indices concerning the quality of life (in an addition to economic growth), does not incorporate the views of locals as to what might actually constitute an improvement in the 'quality of life' for that particular social group/community or for particular individuals within that community. The incorporation of a richer, more ethnographic dimension to such work would possibly contribute to a more nuanced and in-depth portrait of the complex ways in which tourism development may (or may not) provide the necessary social, cultural, economic and political benefits to local societies and/or to specific individuals. The consideration of the dynamics of power which mediate different forms of tourism development and structure tourist behaviour would no doubt benefit from further ethnographic consideration with respective to detailing the micro-experiences of the macro-dimensions of tourism development.

Arguably, qualitative inquiries have not given adequate voice to the diverse range of experiences and attitudes that underlie and condition tourism development in particular localities. One possible reason for this, other than perhaps the continued promotion of Western-derived concepts of 'sustainability' and 'community tourism' and more recently, 'pro-poor tourism' (Ashley *et al*. 2001), is that there are few long-term ethnographic studies carried out in places undergoing long-term tourism development or policy intervention. In addition, there is often a tendency to adopt what is known as the 'rapid ethnographic assessment' or 'rapid participatory appraisal' rather than (longitudinal) ethnographic inquiry in studies of tourism planning and community tourism development (see Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Thus, a series of working visits perhaps combined with qualitative interviewing are substituted for long-term immersion and participation in a particular fieldwork setting. Michaud (1995) takes issue with research carried out into trekking in Northern Thailand by Dearden and Harron (1991, 1992) which claims to be based on 'extensive fieldwork' based on periodic stays of up to three months between 1989 and 1991. While Michaud acknowledges that the evidence collected relating to trekkers' motivations is probably reliable, he is seriously doubtful with regard to the reliability of the data provided which relates to the perceptions [of tourism] and economic life of the highland communities themselves. Not least, he argues, the reliance on Thai middlemen who are 'notoriously unaware of the cultural specificities of the highland ethnic communities' (Michaud 1995: 683), is responsible for a number of factual errors in the final report. It is important to stress

that Dearden (1995) does dispute some of the claims made by Michaud but it does nevertheless highlight some of the concerns that the deployment of this sort of methodological approach brings. While so-called 'fast and dirty techniques' (cf. Hampton, 1997) can elicit a great deal where the focus is on a very specific activity – as in the case of Beer's (1993) study of photography by Japanese tourists (cited in Graburn, 2002: 28) - it is a little less reliable as a means of eliciting the full scope and meaning of host views on tourism as well as the complexity of the power relations that are hidden behind the 'facade' of the development process. Furthermore, the reliance on intermediaries (particularly where the researcher(s) does/do not speak the local language(s)) may also result in substantial errors in the final analysis. In reply to Michaud's rejoinder, Dearden points out perhaps one of the unfortunate realities that constitute the obstacles to such extended periods of fieldwork:

It is gratifying that during the course of his Ph.D work that Michaud had the opportunity to spend a 15-month stretch in Thailand. It is an opportunity that few scholars, including this writer, can engineer once the responsibilities of academic life become a reality (1995: 684)

Tourist Ethnographies

Theoretical and philosophical speculation has been paramount in the study of tourist perceptions, motivation and behaviour. Until recently, social scientific explanations of tourism perceptions have been preoccupied with the development of a series of conceptual classifications of tourists without a thorough undertaking of empirical and in particular, interpretive or ethnographic analyses.

Although, hugely influential and thought-provoking, such popular classifications as 'authenticity-seeking tourists' (MacCannell, 1976), 'existential tourists' (Cohen, 1979b&c, 1988) and 'post-tourists' (Feifer, 1985; Urry, 1990), merely evoke the identities and meanings attached to the tourist with little or no attempt to seek personal accounts and critical involvement in the lives of those these types are said to represent. In addition, Nash (2004) regrets that ethnographic studies have not risen to the challenge of disaggregating tourist populations simply because empirical-based reasoning has not been significantly grounded in tourism enquiries. Yet, as Alneng's (2002) trenchant critique indicates not only are the voice of the tourists absent, the 'tourist' is typically conceived as a 'Westerner' who visits the 'Other'. Tourists who happen to inhabit or come from the destination are mere shadows or do not exist at all:

Rather than having ethnographic accounts speak of cultural complexity, these typologies have done little more than splitting the Tourist into halves and ascribing these different motifs that do not ultimately contest MacCannell's unitary Tourist - they all dwell in a culturally barren landscape of modernist construed universality (Alneng, 2002: 123).

Moreover, as Handler (1990) contends, the belief that there is a general need to engage in a spiritual quest outside of the familiar environment (cf. Cohen 1979b, 1979c) is founded on rather an ethnocentric interpretation of what is deemed 'sacred' and what constitutes 'religion'. To be fair to MacCannell (1976), structuralism was a hugely influential paradigm in the social sciences at the time (Bruner, 2005: 5) and he did in fact

attach himself to a group of middle-class American tourists traveling around Europe as part of his 'fieldwork'. Indeed, even theoretically-oriented authors such as MacCannell (1992) have acknowledged the need for 'hard-headed ethnography' (Nash, 1996:83). Alneng (2002) does however fail to cite a number of ethnographies carried out in 'non-Western' societies including, Beer's (1993) participant observation of Japanese package tourists holidaying in Asia, and Nelson Graburn's own long-term work on domestic tourism in Japan (cited in Graburn, 2002) as well as ethnographies of 'non-Western' tourists, such as Moore's (1985) study of Japanese tourists in Los Angeles. A further interesting development has been in the ethnography of domestic tourism such as Mills' (1999) study of working-class excursions by and for Thai rural migrants living and working in Bangkok. These studies provide a long overdue contribution to our understanding of the diverse socio-cultural contexts for travel and the very different (or indeed similar) ways in which people in/from non-Western societies experience tourism.

Many early investigations of tourism developed qualitative insights concerning the study of tourism motivation and behaviour, of which the work of Boorstin (1977) and MacCannell (1973, 1976) represent defining moments in this area. MacCannell (1976) utilized various forms of data sources such as oral and written commentaries by and on tourists, excerpts from newspapers, brochures and travel guides to form his perspective of the 'modern day tourist'. Yet his work has been rebuked for not being rigorous or systematic in terms of data collection methods and strategies (Moore, 1985). MacCannell's inferences concerning

why and how people travel and experience tourism may have led to a general discussion concerning a universal type of tourist with one particular motive: the search for authentic experiences. However, the identification of specific types of travelers with unique aspirations, experiences and encounters was thus not dealt with fully in his analysis.

By situating his work within the mainstream of sociological theory, it can be asserted that MacCannell's most significant contribution was the provision of a theoretical framework for the examination of tourist experiences, which has since been further refined and examined by a number of scholars (e.g. Buck, 1978; Cohen, 1979c; Gottlieb, 1982; Tucker, 1997), as well as providing the starting point for the elaboration of various tourist types and experiences. Nevertheless, tourist typologies, developed by those such as Cohen (1979a), Redfoot (1984) and Smith (1989), despite identifying the diversity of tourist patterns and differing forms of behaviour, have not benefited from a strong empirical dimension. Bruner (1991) and others (e.g., Campbell, 1988; Andrews, 2004; Selänniemi, 1996, 2001) also question the use of such concepts as the search for 'authenticity' to describe motivational objectives and experiences of tourists, maintaining that they have a tendency to convey the status of academic constructs. Consequently, these categorizations could be far removed from the perceptions and interpretations of those to whom the concepts apply. Nonetheless, tourism textbooks aimed at the graduate and postgraduate student markets are still preoccupied in highlighting the ontological relevance of tourist typologies as being fundamental to understanding tourism

behaviour (for instance, see Cooper *et al.* 2005)**.**

In her study of tourism behaviour in America, Smith (1979) employed observational methods and other anthropological procedures to reveal the socio-cultural reasons for tourism choices. Interestingly, Smith's research focused on discovering how people's travel choices are potentially influenced by the society in which they live. The importance of studying individuals within their home environment in addition to when they become 'tourists' going to/at the destination, is considered a necessary prerequisite for critically identifying the structural and cultural conditions influencing tourism behaviour and the manifold meanings ascribed to touristic experiences (cf. Graburn, 2002). Riley's (1988) study of the 'Budget Traveller' attempted to counteract theoretical speculation on tourist patterns of behaviour. She conducted an ethnographic study of educated, middle class, long distance travelers through participant observation and informal interviews. Although not made explicit, this study pointed to the role of gender and social class in differentiating travel behaviour and experiences. It also indicated that theoretical-based typologies may be misleading in so far as they make little reference to the travel norms, realities and experiences of those they seek to describe, nor account for the influence of tourists' social background, ethnic identities and home life on their perceptions and experiences of travel.

Two collections which delve into the social and cultural contexts for travel *Touring Cultures* (Rojek and Urry, 1997) and motivations for travel *The Tourism Experience* (Ryan, 1997a), attempt to deconstruct contemporary forms of

tourism behaviour in an endeavour to contribute to a conceptual understanding of particular tourist attributes and perceptions: motivational traits and dispositions (Ryan, 1997b), urban experiences (Page, 1997), beach experiences (Ryan, 1997c), meanings and interpretations of events (Craik, 1997), tourist sights (Rojek, 1997) and tourist identifications (Jokinen and Veijola, 1997). Yet despite the merits of these works, they do not significantly deal with the viewpoints, value systems and opinions of tourists; their perceptions are not highlighted, referenced or presented in any empirical depth. Although it may not be the attention of such enquiries to present or directly represent the 'tourist voice', continual speculation within tourism studies concerning tourist roles, identities, cultures and behaviour patterns suggests that the 'tourist' remains as an academic construct, imagined and mythologized by armchair analysts. A recent illustration of the merits of ethnography in tourism can be seen in the work of Jamieson (2004). This study concerns the conceptualization of the Cook Islands by tourists traveling for either the purpose of a honeymoon and/or to marry, was an informative illustration of the ways in which embodied destination experiences of a particular type of tourist can be ontologically highlighted and described through an account based on the interactive use of participation methods: 'close observation', 'participatory dialogue' (with research subjects) and 'extended participation in events' (2004: 153).

Further ethnographic work in tourism has been carried out amongst Finnish charter tourists in southern Europe (Selänniemi, 1996, 2001**,** and British tourists in Mallorca (Andrews 2001; 2004). Work by Andrews and Selänniemi's has

played an important role in challenging certain well-worn assumptions concerning the meaning and status of so-called 'mass tourism' experiences. Selänniemi (2001), for example, establishes that contrary to MacCannell (1976), Finnish mass tourists in Gran Canaria and Rhodes eschew the search for the cultural authenticity of the destination in favor of the intensely authentic *experiences* that come from being surrounded by familiar [Finnish] cultural icons and of course tourists. Similarly, Andrews, demonstrates how British tourists in Magaluf in fact reinforce their national identity through consuming the iconography (and food/drink!) of British-ness on offer in the resort rather than seeking some sort of *escape* from it. Although not altogether surprising, the conclusions derived in these studies do reinforce the crucial role ethnography has to play in the excavation of individualized meanings and subjective expressions concerning tourism experiences within a range of contexts and settings.

The process of developing an insight into people's feelings, attitudes and experiences is considered to be necessary prerequisite for understanding what individuals actually do (or do not do): to account, that is, for the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which influence the choices and the range of decisions that individuals make (Fielding and Fielding, 1986). As Van Maanen (1988:1) stated:

Ethnographic writings can and do inform human conduct and judgement in innumerable ways by pointing to the choices and restrictions that reside at the very heart of social life.

It is not just to the questions of meanings and perceptions that tourism ethnographies can be devoted, there are many areas in the field of tourism participation and access to which ethnographic enquires can and indeed have been applied. Research concerned with examining the structural and material problems affecting people's ability to travel may contribute a deeper understanding of the key factors which activate (or deactivate) the desire or opportunity to travel. In order to understand the key components of tourism motivation it is necessary to take into consideration the 'flip side of motivation' (Haukeland, 1990:172), i.e., the components which contribute to 'demotivation'; only then tourism studies proceed in understanding wider issues concerning people's desires and aspirations to travel. Some specific (non-ethnographic) inquiries are beginning to address specific limitations to tourism participation, concentrating on potential barriers as class inequalities and low income (Seaton, 1992; Shaw and Williams, 1994; Smith and Hughes, 1999), gender divisions (Deem, 1996; Wearing and Wearing, 1996; Swain and Momsen, 2002) and racial prejudice (Philipp, 1994; Stephenson, 2004, 2006; Stephenson and Hughes, 2005).

Traditionally, tourist perceptions and experiences have been conceptually invented and imagined through a myriad arbitrary inferences and non-empirical accounts of tourism behaviour. It is thus essential that people's personal aspirations and experiences are initially observed within a range of contexts and settings, in tourist-generating as well as tourist-receiving societies. This point underlines the argument that tourism studies ought to allow those concerned to speak for themselves, i.e., to tell their own stories and to express their needs, concerns, interests and experiences. It is unfortunate that, with a

minority of notable exceptions (e.g., Campbell, 1988; Graburn 2002:27), tourism studies do not actually penetrate the wealth of social environments existing within tourist-generating countries (for example, ethnic, religious and class-specific enclaves). Such contributions should not be tokenistic (simply paying fleeting attention to minority concerns and aspects of marginality), but should actually employ strategies which are directly accountable to the views of those studied. In the development and advancement of a qualitative approach in the study of tourism behaviour it is necessary that social situations are observed within natural settings, especially to reveal multiple issues of relevance. This approach arguably provides 'contextual information' and a 'rich insight into human behaviour' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 106).

'Critical' Ethnographies of Tourism

Interpretive strategies of enquiry have at times emphasized the importance of cultural meanings at the expense of social action (Marcus, 1986). Indeed, such 'post-modernist' -influenced approaches have found a particular resonance in tourism sociology and anthropology (Rojek and Urry, 1997). Although subject to a degree of criticism (cf. Hammersley 1992), so-called critical ethnographies start from the point of view that the interpretation of meaning is structurally and/or institutionally defined (cf. Willis, 1977).

A critical ethnography quite simply argues that it is not sufficient merely to interpret expressions of cultural identity and intrinsic personal meanings of particular phenomena, but also that one should endeavour to reveal the underlying structural conditions which mediate subjects' existence and experience.

That is not to say that this will necessarily lead to the emancipation of subjects towards some immanent political goal, should one exist, rather that the material conditions of social life constitute subjects' experiences in ways that may not be immediately apparent to them (Callinicos, 1989). Yet the role of the ethnographer in the study of class, ethnic, sexual or gender-specific groups should arguably utilize the perspectives of those concerned, especially to provide an analytical starting point for identifying wider structural concerns. The relative power of different agents and groups in relation to particular tourism strategies is however not directly observable in what Lukes (1974:21) refers to as 'actual behaviour', but emerges in the context of the material conditions under which social actors endure.

The critical ethnographic approach also represents a response to those traditional approaches to ethnography which assume that social groups, organizations and ethnic communities exist within a world within themselves, unaffected by wider issues such as social stratification, inequality and power. Hence, one criticism of the Chicago School of Sociology is that it maintained an uncritical stance towards the structural conditions and effects of capitalism, preferring to understand people's lives within a natural evolutionary process of social change (i.e., urbanization). The emphasis should arguably be placed on the acknowledgment of social change as a contradictory rather than an evolutionary or linear process which involves conflict over resources and results in uneven outcomes. A critical approach to ethnography therefore adopts a dialectical mode of thinking as a means to uncover these antagonisms (Sherman,

1987). The consideration of specific components of tourism (e.g., travel motivations/decisions, experiences, encounters and transactions) can thus be guided by the broader theoretical perspectives of political economy, and the dominant ideological structures of society. Yet these perspectives can also be empirically grounded in the excavation of different responses to touristification at the local level, especially in an attempt to 'uncover the processes that produce and reproduce particular structural forms' (Booth, 1993:57).

Thus, critical ethnographies attempt to explore through people's anecdotal inferences and experiences the macro factors that influence their inter-subjective lives and relationships. For example, Thomas (1993:2-3) advises ethnographers to 'describe, analyze, and to open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power center, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain'. Ethnographies which take into account the socio-political and historical issues affecting individuals and societies have been termed 'critical tales' (Van Mannen, 1988:127). One notable 'critical tale' is Hochschild's (1983) research on 'female flight attendants' based on an ethnographic study of the airline industry. Her work provides a complex insight into the relationship between negative experiences of emotional labor and the commodification of travel in an advanced consumer society.

Studies of tourism behaviour (cf Graburn, 1983, 1989; Jafari, 1987) which imply that the tourism industry can help to integrate or emancipate individuals into the higher realm of 'touristhood' contain an element of functionalism, whereby tourism has the ability to stimulate intense spiritual involvement or produce a rejuvenated self. These accounts, however, do not consider particular social variables or political barriers which could impede an individual's desire or capacity to adopt a tourist identity and participate in liberated experiences and symbolic forms of consumption. Recognition of the more dysfunctional aspects of the tourism experience, such as conflict-based encounters in various social domains, might demonstrate that experiences do not fully encourage elements of self-autonomy, emancipation or self-actualization. Accordingly, ethnographic observations of specific groups (e.g., Asian and Arab travelers) faced with prevailing social problems in transit or at the given destination (e.g. racialized reactions and experiences), could contribute to a critical analysis of tourism behaviour and extend our understanding of tourism and the 'freedom of movement' paradigm (see Stephenson, 2006).

Questions of Validity

Qualitative methodologies have often been accused of being insufficiently rigorous and overly subjective (Walle, 1997). The criticism that a qualitative approach produces accounts which represent the subjective idiosyncratic impressions of researchers rather than objective assessments of the phenomena studied, has partly contributed to its infrequent choice as a research tool. Traditionally, ethnographic studies and qualitative approaches in tourism have been overshadowed by a prevailing emphasis on verification and objective measurement of a given phenomena. Such approaches have been popularly discussed and applied in mainstream tourism studies, and have been reflected in general tourism texts concerning methodological approaches and

techniques (Ritchie and Goeldner, 1994, Smith, 1995).

Attempts to objectively classify people in a world composed of socio-cultural diversity and competing ideological positions arguably leads to misperceptions of the observed phenomena. As Fine (1993: 286) argues:

Objectivity is an illusion smuggled in the comforting blanket of positivism that the world is ultimately knowledgeable and secure.

Thus objective reasoning is not necessarily bias free, social data is primarily subjective as it initially arises from the informant's viewpoints and personal experiences. It may be possible to acquire a more meaningful perspective of people's lifestyles by employing a less detached and more informal method of analysis. This approach could possibly reveal personal information that may be more representative of life worlds of individuals than what could be achieved by a structured, quantitative approach.

Positivism can be distinguished from interpretivism by the belief in a fundamental distinction between facts and values, and that there can be no knowledge independent of experience (Hughes, 1990:20-21). In order to generate knowledge, positivist methodologies seek correlations between isolated variables derived through the construction of hypotheses, which are then tested via the empirical study of social phenomena. Validity is thus derived from the ability to generalize evidence across the whole in order to construct universal laws. Although quantitative approaches may follow a precise and rigorous process of statistical sampling and testing, they strip social phenomena of their situated context and thus

detract from their relevance (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:106). Social phenomena are multi-dimensional and constantly changing, yet a positivistic approach only provides simple correlations that reduce human experiences to a single dimension.

The positivist approach concerning the quantification and statistical relevance of mechanically retrieved evidence is neither dynamic nor contextual particularly as it does not recognise the enterprising roles of individuals and the dialectical processes of social change. In contrast therefore, interpretivism seeks to establish the underlying meaning and purpose of social action and derives validity from the 'the cogency of theoretical reasoning' and contextualization, rather than representativeness and the ability to derive universal and absolute truths from empirical observations (Mitchell, 1983: 217) It is not the actual doing of ethnography that distinguishes an ethnographic approach to inquiry, but rather its underlying epistemologist orientation which underpins such methods of application.

Ethnographers should not necessary be concerned with generalizability but should aim for 'adequate causation'; a notion developed by Weber to explain that social phenomena should be understood in relation to antecedents and consequences and with respect to the particular conditions and circumstances within which they occur (Hughes, 1990: 93-4; Miles and Huberman, 1994:441). Likewise, Williams (2000: 215) argues that it is perfectly reasonable and legitimate to make 'moderatum generalizations' in interpretive research, whereby aspects of a specific social environment may be seen to be instances of

broader social forces (see also Hammersley, 1992: 17-18). It is the significance of the content of the case study that matters rather than the extent to which it can stand as a representative account of the phenomena studied. Hollinshead defends the ethnographic study of tourism from accusations that it is insufficiently scientific:

In ethnographic research it is the explanations which interviewed of observed individuals ascribe to cultural forms that matter, not the supposed arbitrary or quixotic nature of the cultural event itself (1991:657).

The notion of 'objectivity' has been the focus of many debates amongst social scientists regarding the validity of research findings. Yet if we consider the concept of power, the weakness of an 'objectivist' approach becomes apparent. The survey method, for instance, based on positivistic principles of objectivity and generalizability, assumes the locus of decision-making in a particular setting is known. The evidence suggests that this is often not the case, particularly as the internal power structures of social groups are rarely displayed to 'outsiders' (Cohen, 1992; Hunter, 1993) In the field of tourism planning, for instance, Hall (1994) has criticized the pluralist approach which emphasises the visible or concrete dimension of the decision-making process at the expense of considering the hidden, 'irrational' side of power which informs policy-making processes. Despite the claims of objectivity, this approach inevitably reproduces the existing bias of the system under study (Lukes, 1974). Ultimately however, it is the style of reasoning or structure of logic, translated through a particular set of analytical tools, upon which the objectivity of claims to

know and represent reality are founded (Rabinow, 1986).

An interpretive strategy of inquiry assumes that the 'appropriate' questions cannot be known prior to a social event or the moment of interaction. Yet survey methods are constructed according to the priorities and language of the researcher, when in fact, 'questionnaire schedules are often inappropriate because the exact questions are unknown' (Cheater, 1989:39). In contrast an ethnographic approach attempts to situate the study in the vocabulary of the informants and the meanings used to define it, allowing informants a relatively uninhibited range of expression within the everyday context of social interaction. Once interaction becomes formalized in an interview, categorizations of reality as informants perceive and construct it, are harder to assess. This problem is compounded by the fact that the interviewee may evade probing questions and reply with 'officially-sanctioned' answers, or 'playing to the camera' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

Ethnographic approaches distinguish themselves from positivist orientations in that the overriding objective is to produce interpretive-based explanations rather than to search for absolute or definite conclusions, or even complete answers. As Gilroy (1993:15) states:

Heterodox opinions justify themselves not because they are correct or conclusive, but because we need to be able to ask questions without knowing where answering them will lead.

This claim represents a similar point highlighted by Clifford asserting that 'we can

no longer know the whole truth, or even claim to approach it' (1986:25). Ethnographers concerned with providing a humanistic understanding of a particular way of life should not be obsessed in a continual endeavour to search for fixed representations of truth. They should, however, aim for analyses which represent the 'polyphony of voices' (Duncan and Ley, 1993:8).

Longitudinal Perspectives

As is any ethnographic study, long-term immersion into the social context of the field setting is a necessary precondition in order to gain intimate knowledge of the community through a period of systematic and in-depth interaction with members of the study group. The longitudinal approach has obvious advantages in that the ethnographer has regular contact with community members and can encourage local systems of thought to be developed and clarified over a significant period of time. Yet the effectiveness of this approach depends upon the quality of relationships that the researcher has with members of the study group, and also on the extent to which the researcher is prepared to adopt a constructive, learning-type role. Nevertheless, if the researcher intends to establish in-depth interaction with those studied, develop relationships based on trust and represent the multivocal concerns of the community, then long-term immersion in the field setting should be considered as an important prerequisite of ethnographic research.

Examples of longitudinal research in tourism have not been significantly forthcoming. This is perhaps due to some of the difficulties mentioned by Graburn (2002) with regard to

conducting ethnographies of mobile subjects. He also highlights a number of other challenges, including: 'The limited duration of the events and the fleeting presence of the participants, which permit even the most assiduous of ethnographers only the briefest opportunity to carry out in-depth fieldwork' (Graburn, 2002: 20). There are, however, some notable exceptions, particularly where the study of locals' perceptions of tourism and social change in destination are concerned. For example, Cole's (2004) longitudinal, anthropological study of host perceptions of tourism in Ngada, Flores, Indonesia, is one such illustration of the benefits of adopting long-term research methodologies, particularly in helping the researcher critically reflect on the study over significant periods of time and in terms of monitoring how subjects' feelings and perceptions change over time.

The authors firmly recognise the importance of the longitudinal approach to the study of particular groups both within tourist-generating and tourist-receiving societies. This was reflected in their own individual research projects (Stephenson, 1997, Bianchi, 1999; Bianchi and Santana Talavera, 2004). Stephenson's (1997, 2002) study of Afro-Caribbean perceptions of tourism and travel was the product of a long-term ethnographic programme conducted from 1993-1996 in the vicinity of Moss Side, Manchester (UK). The ethnographic method involved a multiplicity of strategies: informal and unstructured interviews with community functionaries from private and public organizations and informal interviews with fifteen key informants, taking place at opportune situations and encounters over the three year period. The fieldwork programme also employed participatory and

observational techniques, developed through an active involvement in the affairs of the community of Moss Side (e.g., youth and advocacy work) and through observing and being involved in various causal/friendly conversations within a variety of public places (e.g., public houses, shops and the local sauna). The researcher also participated in various community outings and family trips. These events were important for the researcher to learn about the nature of particular experiences and encounters. The researcher was generally searching for utterances and opinions relating to people's perceptions of tourism and travel, i.e., motivations and aspirations, particular places visited and/or not visited, choices made and (positive and negative) experiences encountered. The work generally attempted to contribute to an understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of identity issues in travel/tourism and provide an insight into the process of 'belonging' and 'unbelonging', as well as producing a qualitative assessment of the way in which ethnic based choices influence different types of travel experiences.

In Bianchi's (1999) ethnographic study of tourism and social change in Gran Canaria, he was particularly concerned with the power struggles and social relations that were intertwined with the processes of tourism development and conditioned entrepreneurial involvement in the constantly changing tourism economy. This work was also unique in so far as it built on previous ethnographic work carried out by the Canary Island anthropologist Santana Talavera (1990), whose work was more specifically concerned with changes in the social organization of fishing in the village, resulting in a joint publication some years later (see also Bianchi and Santana Talavera, 2004).

Bianchi's (1999) study involved an initial, three-month period of preliminary work in the capital Las Palmas, followed by a period of continuous residence for seven months in the village between January 1993 and August 1994 during which time much of the fieldwork was carried out.

The ethnographic fieldwork was subsequently followed by a series of visits lasting up to four weeks between 1995 and 1998. During his sojourn in the village much of the time was spent deploying many of the same strategies outlined by Stephenson above, in order to elicit a range of information from the locals. Like many ethnographies, Bianchi's principal gate-keeper, informant and confidante was a well-respected entrepreneur, 'Santiago', with an established presence and family history in the village (approximately 600 permanent residents which does not include the substantial floating population of tourists, working-tourists and 'foreign' entrepreneurs). However, in contrast to Selänniemi (1996, 2001) – who coincidentally was working in Gran Canaria at the same time - the researcher's own cultural and class contrast with Santiago and the majority of local residents did present some obstacles to carrying out the work, although this lessened over time.

The researcher's own familiarity with, and similarity to, many of the tourists themselves (who were not the focus of the study) only served to complicate matters! More importantly perhaps, and in contrast to custom, the researcher also attempted to minimize being seen by locals when conducting research in the local government archives and the land registry. For, this posed the risk of placing a further barrier between them given the traditional

distrust of authority in such southern European contexts. Given many of the limitations in carrying out the fieldwork (i.e., difficulty of taking notes and the heterogeneous, divided and constantly shifting composition of the local context) the 'voices' of the locals, in so far as they have been filtered and paraphrased by the researcher, are not written into the text as explicitly as they are in Stephenson's (1997, 2002) work. Nevertheless, it represents a sincere attempt to understand the nuanced and multi-faceted insertion of tourism into people's lives and their social environment. Given the increasing scope of research concerning the sociological and anthropological approaches to the study of tourism, it is anticipated and hoped, that further longitudinal ethnographies will contribute fruitful and scholastic insights into the diverse experiences and trajectories of tourism, tourists and the tourism industry.

The Essence of Participant Observation

Participant observation embodies an approach whereby the researcher is the methodological tool. Thus, 'it is the fact of participation, of being part of the collective contract, which creates the data' (Evans, 1988:209). It is a systematic and locally structured process in which the observation, involving the recording and interpretation of behaviour and events, is carried out simultaneously within the research setting. Prolonged immersion in the research setting is essential in order to gain access to domains of social experience that would otherwise have been inaccessible using quantitative survey techniques or formal interviews. Participant observation thus provides one of the most effective means of gaining access to the social world(s) of the

subjects, particularly through a series of regular encounters and informal conversations within the given setting.

One of the principal strengths of participant observation is that it enables researchers to minimise the evasion of specific questions or deliberately misleading answers, which are more likely to occur in the context of a formalized encounter and cannot be eliminated altogether,. Indeed, in her study of tourism and family change in Crete, Kousis (1989) was forced to abandon formal interviews as it made informants feel uneasy. Although the study group can determine the techniques available to the researcher, it is the researcher's status and role that often has a profound influence on what can or cannot be researched. Kidder, for instance, believed that she was able to study an expatriate community in India and develop a deeper understanding of the 'life of the sojourner' simply because her status and nationality allowed her to be perceived by others as an expatriate (Kidder and Judd, 1986).

Fetterman (1989:95) advised ethnographers to observe 'key events', believing them to be a 'metaphor' for the wider expression of particular cultures. These events may be unpredictable in relation to information and content retrieved, but may nonetheless contribute to the production of 'thick' and 'descriptive' accounts of the phenomena studied. Such events could have a revealing nature, enabling ethnographers to come to terms with the cultural and/or political idiosyncratic nature of the community studied. An observational and covert approach, which involves 'systematic lurking' (Dann *et al.* 1988:25) at particular locales or tourist sites,

may provide an opportunity for a more contextualized and nuanced understanding of touristic experiences and developments, in particular social, economic and political environments**.**

It is also considered necessary to pay special attention to aspects of 'vocality': intersubjective meanings, plurivocal expressions and grammatical vocalizations (Hollinshead, 1998:75). The development of a humanistic insight into the lived experiences of community members would present an important challenge to those perspectives based on academic-centered classifications and categorizations of the tourism phenomena: tourist perceptions, tourism behaviour, host perceptions and host-guest encounters. Accounts of people's personal explanations, as well as individual or collective actions, could enable researchers to present more empirically-informed perspectives concerning the possible reasons why certain behaviour patterns occur or why particular percepts emerge.

The ultimate aim of ethnographic practice is to obtain explicit and tacit knowledge which is familiar to members of a particular culture or society (Boyle, 1994). As indicated, one approach of the ethnographer would be to utilize 'friendly conversations' (Spradley, 1979: 58-68). These casual approach based conversations may be appropriate in situations where the ethnographer may not wish to reveal his/her motives of inquiry to members of the study group. Casual probing through introducing particular questions into the conversation may encourage new responses from members of the study group, thereby assisting informants to respond more spontaneously than the more formal method of interrogation. Friendly conversations can encourage ethnographers to search for 'description', 'explanation', 'clarity', 'structure', 'contrast' and 'difference' (Spradley, 1979).

There may be a point at which the researcher may have to decide which of his/her informants is going to be of greatest utility in terms of accessing relevant social networks and information. The influential and often ambiguous role that particular informants (gate-keepers or research confederates) have in gaining and maintaining access to a community or society has been commonly noted in key research methods texts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Werner and Schoepfle, 1987). Research confederates have been particularly useful to those ethnographers studying ethnic minority groups residing in urban societies, especially in terms of enabling them to become more acquainted with the culture and group being studied (Liebow, 1967; Whyte, 1981). In his ethnographic study of an Italian American streetcorner gang in south Boston, Whyte (1981) acknowledged how his confederate, Doc, the gang leader, enabled him to gain direct access to particular social networks that would have been difficult to achieve through independent means. Likewise, Liebow (1967) formed a close relationship with Tally during his study of black American men in a low-income district of Washington DC. His association with Tally, a dominant member of the group, encouraged him to become more familiar with the community studied and to be accepted by the wider group.

There is, however, little evidence to suggest that ethnographers in tourism have worked closely with research confederates or

gatekeepers during their fieldwork studies. This is perhaps less relevant to studies of *tourists* than it is for those studies devoted to the places they visit, as well as the manifold agencies and institutions which produce and develop tourism (an area deserving of far more consideration than there is at present). Nevertheless, this omission questions the extent to which tourism ethnographies are based on longitudinal approaches and long-term immersions in the field. It also questions the level to which ethnographic research has effectively utilized important members of the community to help provide the necessary contacts and the degree to which it has provided researchers with the opportunity to move beyond the confines of the 'front regions' of everyday life (Goffman,1971).

However, there are two particular ethnographic studies which have highlighted the importance of utilising research confederates in the production of insider information: Crick's (1992, 1995) ethnographic study of tourism's informal enterprises in Kandy (Sri Lanka) and Stephenson's (1997) ethnographic inquiry of the tourism motivations and experiences of the Caribbean community of Moss Side, Manchester (UK). Crick (1992), for instance, formed a close relationships with a pavement hawker named Ali, who provided him with an enlightened insight into the inter-subjective relationships between host and guest encounters, particularly with respect to the way in which commercial transactions are constructed between the two parties. His relationship with Ali revealed some important ethnographic issues regarding the way in which particular members of host societies perceive anthropologists, not least their perceived affinity with tourists. Likewise, Bruner (2005)

cites correspondence from fellow anthropologist Hildred Geertz, who was working in Bali at the same time as he. In her letter it is clear that despite her 'status' as a professional anthropologist, the Balinese themselves were never under any illusions that she was merely another tourist among the others (Bruner, 2005: 203). In his work in Gran Canaria, Bianchi (1999) also encountered similar categorization on behalf of the locals in the fishing village/tourist resort he studied. Although, as the focus of this particular study was on social change and tourism in the village itself, there was a continuous need to try and maintain a credible distance from the tourists in the village. This was done not out of any contempt for tourists but rather to inspire confidence amongst the local residents and informants who even on such a tourist-saturated island were often still wary of tourists.

Stephenson's (1997) research programme was aided by a research confederate named Junior, who was able to offer him advice, facilitate his access to various social spaces and introduce him to various members of the community. Junior was an important asset to the programme as the researcher was of an ethnic background different from the study group and was not initially familiar with the geographical area or culture studied. As a senior youth worker in Moss Side Junior was a highly respected member of the community. His knowledge of the area and his range of contacts with individuals and community-based organizations encouraged the collection of range of diverse anecdotal material. Stephenson worked with Junior on a voluntary basis at his Youth Centre and often accompanied him on evenings out, day trips and weekend breaks. He was also invited to

various community events (e.g., cricket and dance festivals) and celebrations (e.g., births, weddings and wakes), all of which enabled him to observe and participate in casual/friendly conversations with various members of the community. Moreover, Junior would clarify emerging issues in the field, in particular, the significance of traveling to the ancestral homeland and the racial problems that members of the study group encountered whilst visiting various European destinations, including the British countryside (see Stephenson, 2002, 2006).

Ethnographic research can be a lonely and arduous process. Therefore, support and advice from research confederates can reduce any personal anxieties and concerns that may occur as a consequence of being an 'outsider' to the community or study group.

Being Reflexive

In tourism research we seldom see detailed discussions concerning a critique of the researcher's role within the study. This is apparent on two accounts: firstly, tourism researchers do not significantly provide detailed critical descriptions of their methods of study and the techniques that they employ, i.e., the process of and reasons for data collection; secondly, researchers do not comprehensively reflect upon their relationships with the study group and within the wider field setting. Researchers have a significant role to play in the production and analysis of information, and also in the way informants have been influenced by their presence during encounters in the field. Therefore, it is arguably necessary to disclose information which may have an influence on how and why particular ideas, views and

conclusions were constructed and/or reconstructed.

Järviluoma *et al.* (2003) go as far as to argue that researchers should actually take a 'positional' stance by disclosing their theoretical position, which has a natural and obvious impact on the type of methods utilized and the way in which the ethnographic texts are narrated. They state:

We believe that the researcher is always part of his/her study. His/her scholarly background, as well as the political and methodological choices she/he makes defines the position from which the study will be conducted, and directs the results of the study. The 'objectivity' of a study evolves from the explicit positioning of the background factors influencing the methodological choices, the perspectives taken, as well as the selection of the material (2003:23)

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:14) criticised both positivism and naturalism for emphasizing that researchers should isolate themselves from the data by adopting either a 'standardized' approach (relating to the former perspective) or a 'neutral' approach (relating to the latter perspective). The naturalist method assumes that a culture or society is simply 'out there' to be studied and thus does not draw attention to the reflexive elements of the research process (Muecke, 1994). Thus the 'reflexive approach' is one which accounts for, and reflects on, the researcher's role within the fieldwork programme, and considers the degree to which this role has a significant influence on the phenomenon studied.

Ryan and Golden (2006) highlight the value of reflexivity despite the fact that positivistic

methods are often perceived to produce knowledge that objectively and legitimately reflects the phenomenon studied, as opposed to methods employed by experiential-based approaches. Given that it is argued that the subjective nature of ethnographic enquiry predetermines the degree to which the researcher is an influential component of the research process, ethnographic texts in tourism studies should actively acknowledge how information was sought, gathered, analyzed and presented, as well as reflect on ways in which the judgments and perceptions of ethnographers are constructed, represented and articulated.

Tourism researchers have more often than not tended to avoid presenting autobiographical accounts of their roles during the research process. The textual authority of ethnographic accounts have been open to intense scrutiny, especially given the ongoing crisis concerning the legitimization of ethnographic research (Denzin, 1997). It is important that accounts pay special attention to the 'ethnographic self', relevant in describing and critically acknowledging the degree of personal and emotional involvement in the field (Coffey, 1999). Crick (1995) asserts that it is important for fieldworkers to inform a wider audience of the type of roles that have been adopted during the ethnographic programme. He states:

Quite apart from what research project one designs in advance, the reality is very much more that what one does in the field is determined by what other people allow one to be (Crick, 1995:216).

As members of the study group can assert a significant degree of authority upon the researcher-researched relationship, as well as

have a direct influence on how they are perceived and represented, it is epistemologically astute to raise issues concerning the researcher's own 'anthropological identity' in the process of understanding the phenomena studied (Crick, 1985, 1995). Researchers, for instance, should critically consider the differences and similarities between their roles and the roles of tourists. This approach would help to re-focus our comprehension of the diverse nature of tourism. Crick (1985) believes that anthropologists are similar to tourists on the grounds that they do not significantly develop objective assessments of the 'other' and do not fully engage in interactive and long-term relationships in the field. He questions the epistemological distance that ostensibly exists between tourists and ethnographers (1985, 1995). He goes so far to suggest that both activities involve practices which overlap and are framed by similar socio-political circumstances. Bruner (1989:112), however, maintains that the two roles are distinctively different:

Ethnographers want thick description; tourists thin description. Ethnographers seek a processual historic world; tourists, the timeless ethnographic present. Ethnographers demand complexity; tourists, ready accessibility.

Errington and Gewertz (1989) also refute Crick's (1985, 1995) views, asserting that the critical sensibilities of anthropologists/ ethnographers differentiate them from tourists, where the latter:

Have little impetus or competence to go beyond self-reference: the significance of the other is largely in what it does for oneself.... Tourists are essentially unlinear evolutionists who find

the world filled with chiefs and witch doctors, and their self-referential tales are based on - indeed require - partial, simplified and often erroneous information. What can distinguish anthropologists from tourists is that we can and must be political in terms not self-referential and individualistic, but comparative and systematic (Errington and Gewertz, 1989:46).

This perspective stands in contrast to the postmodernist view concerning tourist sensibilities, where it argued that (post-) tourists are actually becoming more critical of the environments they visit (Feifer, 1985, Urry, 1990). Hence, tourists are not always passive individuals misled by the commercial exploits of the tourism industry, but have a social and cognitive capacity to acknowledge that particular tourism events and products are actually contrived and commodified. Krippendorf (1989: 132), for instance, argues that tourists should actually be perceived as 'critical consumers'. From this perspective, it could be argued that Errington and Gewertz (1989) underestimate the degree of personal empowerment and instructive awareness that some tourists may have during visits to other places and destinations.

Despite Crick's (1985, 1995) call for researchers to be more critically aware of their involvement during the fieldwork programme, few have been forthcoming. Bruner's (1995) research as a tour guide in Indonesia is but one exception. This study, partly concerned with understanding how tourists experience and encounter tourist sites and events, draws attention to the ambiguous nature of the ethnographic role. Thus Bruner (1995: 230-231) notes:

My double role as a tour guide serving tourists, and as an ethnographer studying them, placed me in an interstitial position between touristic and ethnographic discourse, and I must admit that I had not been aware of the ambiguities of the position in which I had placed myself. As ethnographer I wanted to know how tourists experienced the sites, but as a tour guide my task was to structure that experience through my lectures and explanations. My talk mediated their experience and, in a sense, I found myself studying myself....

Although Bruner's view illustrates the thoroughly partial role that ethnographers adopt during their research programme, it further indicates how the reflexive process of research involvement can indeed contribute to a detailed understanding of the observed phenomenon. One of Bruner's (1995) research conclusions clarified the conceptual demarcation between the roles and activities of both ethnographers and tourists, especially with respect to the ethnographer's active participation in the research process. Hence, he noted that tourists surrender control over their experiences, exemplified by the way in which individuals within guided tours are often directed and stage managed by the tour guide. In contrast to this, ethnographers constantly 'struggle' to deal with the nature of their enquiries, illustrated by constant attempts to interpret data and analyse their own position within the study programme, i.e., grappling with the reality of their relationship with informants and within the system in which they work (Bruner, 1995). In Bruner's (1995) case, working for a tour agency seemingly presented a number of limitations on his role as a tour guide.

One possible way forward is to take heed of Fielding's (1993) advice, emphasising that researchers should openly admit mistakes and failures and should also declare preconceived bias as part of the overall analysis. It is the opinion of the authors of this paper that a more reflexive approach to research would bring ethnographers directly into the picture of analysis, enabling them to effectively contextualize and substantiate particular observations and local responses. Yet in doing so, researchers should further account for ethical issues and dilemmas which may affect the research programme. As tourism often involves cross-cultural processes and transactions, one ethical problem that may pose difficulties relates to the cultural and ethnic distinctions that exist between the researcher and the target group. These differences may present problems in freely eliciting ethnographic data, especially if the researcher is of a different ethnic background (Walton, 1986). Lipson (1994) raises another 'moral dilemma' in ethnographic research:

What obligation do ethnographers have to people who bare their souls so that researchers can write an article or a book and get promoted? (1994:350)

This issue, regarding elements of personal gain, may be cleared through engaging in mutual relationships which embody 'moral responsibilities' (e.g., voluntary work in the community). Yet as Jackson (1985:170) stresses, 'ethnographers can no longer hide behind the shield of benign intentions'. Hence, being sensitive to community concerns may not necessarily remove the power imbalance as what is written in the final analysis is outside the control of the members of the study group.

There is no reason why ethnographers can attempt to decenter their own subjective perceptions by centralizing the concerns of the study group, developed through a textual presentation of detailed anecdotal and observational material to a wider audience. Accordingly, researchers need to directly acknowledge and explain their roles with respect to the methodological process, especially if this process is managed by what has been termed the 'reflexive rationalization of conduct' (May, 1993:116). Nonetheless, researchers should not only explain their own role with respect to the process of collecting the information and analysing the data, but also in terms of presenting their ethnographic texts.

However, Duncan and Ley (1993:8) maintain that the task to produce a completely decentered analysis is not always possible as researchers have 'defined the project in the first place'. Although researchers are faced with the almost impossible task of challenging their 'political authority and representational control over the production of the text' (Duncan and Ley, 1993:8), it is important that the views of those studied are openly expressed, articulated and sensitively portrayed in a manner that pays attention to aspects of multi-vocality.

Discussions of individuals outside of their own conceptually informed frameworks and socio-cultural environments can potentially lead to their disempowerment from the representational process of analysis. If tourism inquiries do not fully address the perspectives of the subjects themselves, then 'our social scientific work risks being descriptively poor and ethnocentric' (Crick, 1989: 338). Enquiries should thus be humanistic in their intent,

approach and task, even if it is to be acknowledged that:

One cannot completely escape from ethnocentrism, for by definition all representations are inextricably intertwined with the theory-laden categories of the research (Duncan and Ley, 1993:8).

Conclusion

If as social researchers in tourism we are concerned not merely with identifying causality and generalizable conclusions, but rather, with gaining a deeper understanding of the points of view of those embedded within the broad framework of tourism, then ethnography offers a valuable yet still under-employed methodological approach for such a purpose. In this paper it has been argued that tourism studies have largely ignored the full capabilities of ethnography, even where it is invoked as part of a qualitative research strategy. In addition, as the authors along with others have argued, many tourist ethnographies have yet to turn their attention to the wider context in which tourists live their lives and make decisions regarding where and how to travel, as well as, to the plethora of mobile experiences that may be encapsulated within tourism (cf. Bianchi, 2000; Uriely, 2001; Hannam *et al.* 2006). Ethnographic research into the broad spectrum of tourist experiences at 'home' and 'away' of individuals, and of those whose lives have in one way or another been affected by tourism and travel, are still relatively few and far between. Nor, has tourism research been particularly forthcoming with regard to the difficulty of detachment from the mode of investigation, from the subjects, and also from the very nature of social scientific paradigms

and philosophies. Ethnographic research is not just about examining data but is also about accounting for the ethnographer's role within the process of collecting, analyzing and presenting the material.

With its ability to render apparent the dense and layered qualities of social life and places, ethnography can illuminate other areas of tourism that have perhaps not yet received sufficient attention. This might include the manifold agencies, institutions and corporations that are involved in the production and regulation of tourism. Indeed, there have been few attempts to penetrate the political and business worlds of tourism, an endeavour which would help to contextualize and interrogate the various models of political economy, development and management of tourism from the point of view of those 'inside' such spaces. Indeed Shore's (2000) in-depth study of the European Union presents a possible avenue for further exploration with regard to how wider institutional forces and [tourism/heritage] policy interventions are manifest in peoples' everyday lives, whilst Hitchcock and Nyoman Darma Putra (2007) blend the study of court transcripts and ethnographic material in their analysis of tourism and terrorism in Bali.

Recently, one of the authors was involved in a multi-sited, comparative study of intangible heritage in 13 Mediterranean cities and London. This study, part-funded by the European Union, involved a combination of ethnographies, oral histories and digital technologies to document the experiences, views and practices of people living in and around historic centres of heritage and tourism.

This collection of stories, films and texts was then disseminated primarily via a multi-lingual database through which their hitherto 'muted' voices could be seen and heard (see http://www.med-voices.org). A project of this kind, although difficult to implement due to its financial and resourcing requirements offers two possibilities for future ethnographic work in tourism. First, as a multilingual, multi-authored hypertext, the ethnographic database enables users to navigate in such a fashion as to juxtapose the many different narratives and voices which have contributed to the production of the material (see Scott, 2005), thus fulfilling one of the essential aims of ethnography. Second, much of the work was carried out in collaboration with a range of grass-roots organizations and 'ordinary' residents themselves. In so doing, it points to the potential for the application of wide-ranging, multi-sited ethnographies in tourism, heritage and other related fields of research.

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