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ARTICLE

Ethics and ecotourism: connections and conflicts

JUDITH CHELIUS STARK
Department of Philosophy, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ, USA

Abstract *In this essay the author examines the burgeoning industry of ecotourism, analyzing definitions of "ecotourism" and exploring a number of compelling issues raised by the recent trend in worldwide tourism. She then examines three sample codes of ecotourism: one site-specific (Antarctic Traveller's Code), one from a major environmental group (National Audubon Society), and one developed by a consultant for a travel research firm (Code for Leisure Destination Development). The presuppositions, value, and limitations of these codes are then analyzed. On the basis of this analysis, the author proceeds to a discussion of the frameworks for negotiating discourses about ecotourism. Stark argues that the limitations detected in the sample codes of ethics for ecotourism would be fruitfully addressed by Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics augmented by the feminist ethical and political theories of Seyla Benhabib who draws on the work of Hannah Arendt. While bracketing the debates surrounding the justification of Habermas's principle of universalizability, the author argues that the over-emphasis on the rational aspects both of the principle itself and on the notion of "rational trust" stand in need of a corrective if discourse ethics is to be used successfully in negotiating real-life conflicts. Stark argues for a kind of "application discourse" using the feminist ethical and political theories of Benhabib drawn from Arendt's work in which "associational public spaces" are created through relational processes in the acts themselves of meeting and discourse. The author claims that Benhabib and Arendt's works contain fruitful theoretical approaches that also leave room to deal with policies and practical applications as debates about ecotourism increase around the world. Far from exhausting the possibilities, this essay opens up the connections between these theoretical approaches and a new area of environmental concern—ecotourism.*

Introduction

> The retreat of the wilderness under the barrage of motorized tourists is no local thing; Hudson Bay, Alaska, Mexico, South Africa are giving way, South America and Siberia are next. Drums along the Mohawk are now honks along the rivers of the world. Homo sapiens putters no more under his own vine and fig tree; he has poured into his gas tank the stored motivity of countless

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> creatures aspiring through the ages to wiggle their way to pastures new. Ant-like he swarms the continents—This is Outdoor Recreation, Latest Model.[1]

No doubt many readers recognize these words of Aldo Leopold from *A Sand County Almanac*. Written in 1947, they heralded the explosion of the automobile age in North America and Europe. How prescient he was and, no doubt, he would have been shocked and dismayed at the pervasive reach of trains, planes and automobiles spanning the globe. However, where some people are dismayed, others see opportunities, especially economic opportunities.

By all economic indicators, tourism and leisure travel have increased exponentially since the end of World War II. Estimates are that such travel has increased almost fifty fold over the last half century. With ever more access to air travel, these rates of growth show few signs of abating. It goes without saying that there are enormous environmental issues raised by the use of fossil fuels for transportation, especially with the private passenger car. I do not address those issues in this paper, as significant and compelling as they are. Instead, I focus on another set of issues that arises from such dramatic increases in global tourism. In particular, I focus on fairly recent trends in so-called ecotourism and adventure travel and raise a series of questions about how we might begin to think through the ethical aspects of this kind of human activity, especially in light of environmental concerns.

Journeying is nothing new in human experience. The nomadic patterns of hunting and gathering were the norm that preceded the more settled lives of the practitioners of early agriculture and the builders of villages and towns. To this day indigenous cultures around the world find the western penchant for tourism and leisure travel somewhat puzzling and regard it with amusement as well as with a hefty dose of suspicion—the latter in many instances with good reason.[2] Moreover, even in western societies, it was only with the advance of highly industrialized societies that rigidly separated times for "work" and "leisure" came to be a central phenomenon of life for vast numbers of people. In the past, travel in the west was usually undertaken for conquest, trade, warfare, exploration, emigration or religious expansion. Until the rise of modern industrialized societies, travel was very costly and arduous and was undertaken for leisure purposes only by the wealthy few who aspired to see new sites or who longed for adventure. All this has changed dramatically in the last century with the ease and relative decline in the cost of travel. No longer considered a luxury, holiday and vacation travel have become an expected and necessary complement to the structured experience of work for most people in contemporary industrial and post-industrial societies.

Just as tourism has reached unprecedented proportions, the literature that tracks, analyzes, markets and predicts this global phenomenon has also expanded dramatically over the last few decades. In this paper, I focus on one aspect of contemporary, global tourism—ecotourism and adventure travel. I mention both of these because there is some overlap between them: ecotourism may include some adventure travel, but not all adventure travel fits under the rubric of ecotourism. Nonetheless, they share some important features and will be addressed together. In brief, this essay includes these sections: definitions, compelling issues and questions raised by ecotourism, an analysis of some sample codes of ethics for tourism and ecotourism—their value and limitations, frameworks for negotiating discourses about ecotourism, and concluding comments and suggestions. At the heart of the essay, I argue that the limitations detected in the sample codes of ethics for tourism and ecotourism would be fruitfully addressed by Habermas's

discourse ethics augmented by the feminist political and ethical theories of Seyla Benhabib and Hannah Arendt.

Definitions

The use of the term itself—ecotourism—is not without problems. The literature devoted to ecotourism reflects these problems. In fact, the problems run the gamut from those ecotours that genuinely respect the environment and local populations of the host area to the marketing ploy that simply re-packages the old holiday tour with the term "eco" tacked on in front in order to exploit public sensibility about the environment. There is no doubt that worldwide public opinion is becoming increasingly concerned with environmental problems. The nature of these concerns differs enormously around the globe depending on complex economic, social, and cultural conditions. Global issues of access, use, and exploitation of limited resources as well as uneven and inequitable distribution of goods and services greatly complicate ecotourism and adventure travel. In the midst of this, it is important to raise the question of how an environmentally concerned traveler can make informed judgments about the marketing claims of travel packages that use the label "ecotourism" and purport to be environmentally sound, economically helpful to the local community, and ethical to boot.

For the purposes of this essay, I use the definition of ecotourism that emerged from a National Workshop on Ecotourism that was held in Canada in 1991:

> Ecotourism is an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of the host communities.[3]

In citing this definition in her article "Environmentally Responsible Marketing of Tourism," Pamela Wight goes on to describe the two prevailing views of ecotourism:

> One envisages that public interest in the environment may be used to market a product; the other sees that this same interest may be used to conserve the resources upon which the product is based. These views need not be mutually exclusive and may very well be complementary. What is required is an effective integration of both views so that the industry and the resource may be sustained over the long term.[4]

Both the definition just given and the two views of ecotourism outlined by Wight are packed with many of the thorny issues confronting the theories and practices of ecotourism. I highlight some of these issues in the next section of the essay, keeping in mind the genuine as well as the spurious uses of the term ecotourism. As Kelman warns in his analysis of ecotourism: "A tour advertised as environmentally friendly can be just as suspect as many of the products tarted up with green packaging in your grocery store."[5]

Questions and Issues Raised by Ecotourism

As human living spaces in North America become more homogenized, sanitized and removed from the natural world, there seems to be an attendant impulse on the part of more people to travel to far-flung places on the globe. It is hardly surprising that as human life becomes more routinized and predictable, the "call of the wild" becomes more alluring. In a time of extreme sports and extravagances of all sorts, extreme places

are becoming popular destinations for holiday travels. Once the province of wealthy elites, these adventures are more available and attractive to greater numbers of travelers—whether going on safari in Kenya, pack riding in Outer Mongolia or kayaking along Greenland's "Rivera." These trips raise compelling questions across many disciplines and interests and in the following section I present a sampling of these questions.

- Human incursions and impacts on local and often fragile ecosystems: do we want to think of "carrying capacities" for specific sites and ecosystems in order to limit possible deleterious effects?
- Commodification of nature and adventure travel: do these trips simply become something else for tourists to acquire and display? Are the trips the expression of the latest competition for the fashionable or "in" places to visit and "collect"?
- The "exotic" and the "other" in ecotourism: does this kind of travel only serve to re-enforce notions of "exoticism" and "otherness" and thereby increase the objectification of local cultures for spectacle and appropriation?
- Costs and benefits of ecotourism in relation to the human and natural environments: who wins, who loses, especially in developing countries where the "resource" being exploited for ecotourism may be one that has economic, traditional or cult value for local populations? Who are the stakeholders: how are decisions made; do local populations participate in decision making or do local elites or other jurisdictional agencies make decisions?
- Sustainable tourism as a subset of sustainable development: since the 1987 publication of the report from the UN World Commission on the Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission), the concept of sustainable development has been moving more fully into political and economic discourse. By and large, this is a good thing, but it also raises important questions. The brief definition of sustainable development is that it is the process by which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[6] (WCED 8). A number of critics have pointed out serious problems with both the theory and applications of this concept. I mention just two. Michael Redclift highlights the fact that the Brundtland Commission report emphasizes human needs, but does not give due weight to protecting the environment.[7] Even more critical are William Rees's observations that the very way of thinking that views nature solely in material and mechanistic terms cannot get us out of the deep problems we have created in the first place because of these very attitudes toward nature. Nothing less than a paradigm shift in our thinking is called for in order to effect meaningful change.[8] Nevertheless, even given these points, the notion of sustainable tourism can be a powerful heuristic for thinking through environmental issues related to tourism on the local level. Moreover, it would make sense to work out some of the problems of sustainable tourism on the local level using ecotourism and adventure travel as experiments to see if sustainable tourism can be made to work.
- Issues of gender, race, ethnicity and social-economic class related to ecotourism both in host locations and with regard to the visitors: the model of the all-male, white enclave of the Explorers Club no longer fits the ecotourist and adventure traveler of the twenty-first century. What does it mean for the nature of tourism that more women, ethnic and racial groups and social-economic classes are traveling? What are their predispositions, expectations and choices as these groups travel within their own

countries and farther afield? How will their activities change tourism in general and ecotourism and adventure travel in particular?

- More people traveling to pristine locations: many studies show that for North American and European travelers, a "nature experience" of some sort is part of what they expect and plan for. In Florida, for example, Disney World is not the only sought after destination; pristine beaches and wildlife sanctuaries are also high on tourists' lists. A recent survey in the state of Florida indicated that "more than 64 percent of those surveyed said their last trip to Florida included nature-based activities."[9] Amazingly in North America, bird watching is identified as the fastest growing recreational activity in the US increasing more rapidly than hiking, bicycling and skiing.[10] The ironic prospect that habitats and bird species may be the potential victims of their increasing popularity is beginning to be addressed by state agencies and nature groups like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club.

These are just a few of the compelling issues and questions that a full analysis of the ethical dimensions of ecotourism and adventure travel needs to confront in order to find long-term and satisfactory solutions.

Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct for Ecotourism

Even the most benighted tour operators realize that it makes no sense to foul the nest while at the same time they hope to feather it. Public opinion is highly sensitive to changing conditions at tourist destinations and it does not take long in this Internet era for word to get out that the reality on the ground fails to live up to the marketing rhetoric in the glossy brochures. This is especially the case with those who have the interest, resources, and leisure time to go on ecotours and adventure travels. Increasingly over the last decade or so, stakeholders in these types of tourism have been meeting and working to ensure a quality experience for travelers with a minimum of harmful effects on the local ecosystems and human communities. This balancing act has not been easy to achieve, especially with ever-increasing numbers of people who want to travel to "exotic" places around the world. Furthermore, the drive for financial gain cannot be underestimated both for the tour operators as well as for the host communities. These problems are even more pronounced in the developing world in which more traditional ways of life as well as local resource bases are made more vulnerable by possible conflicts between short-term use by local populations and the attractions of tourist monies flowing into local economies. Clearly, systemic and structural responses are needed to address these issues if long-term, sustainable and equitable solutions are to be found. Moreover, these issues need responses that are multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary in methodology and include economics, environmental studies, public policy, marketing, grass-roots collaboration, anthropology, sociology and finally ethics and applied ethics. In much of the literature, at least some nod is given to ethics as it relates to these pressing issues, but it often appears in the conclusion of the articles where authors mention ethics under the rubric of what needs further examination or study.

Much of the discussion about tourism in general and even ecotourism uses arguments based on the view of nature as a resource or a commodity. This view is highly anthropocentric and assumes as its starting points the notions of human dominion over nature and/or the fundamental divide between human beings and the rest of nature. These assumptions themselves need to be unpacked and analyzed in any full treatment

of the issues facing ecotourism and adventure travel. Furthermore, many of the arguments are also based on some version of enlightened self-interest whether on the part of the tour operators, host communities or tourists themselves. Essentially, these arguments take the form of an injunction to take care of the natural site so that it will continue to be an attractive tour destination.[11] The chairman of the Association of Independent Tour Operators in Europe put it this way, "... it is time to protect the product on which our businesses depend ... if we do not help conserve the very places which our clients clamour to see then, in five years, we shall have no clients at all ... those dream locations will have been ruined."[12] This is not to say that either ecotour managers or ecotourists themselves operate exclusively from anthropocentric norms or that they do not operate from the recognition of the inherent value of the places they visit. It is rather to claim that the arguments made for the preservation of specific locations (especially in the ecotourism literature and advertising) often appeal to self-regarding and anthropocentric norms, that is, that these locations be preserved so that human beings will have the opportunity to experience and appreciate them.

In recognition of and as a response to some problems raised by ecotourism, codes of ethics and codes of conduct have been developed by and for tour operators, nature organizations, ecotourists, and host communities. In this section of the paper, three of these codes are discussed. It is revelatory to examine these codes to see what is being valued in them, how the maxims are stated and what their limitation are. The fact that they are three different kinds of codes illustrates that there are various ways to approach ecotourism: one code is site-specific (Antarctica); another comes from a leading nature group (the National Audubon Society); and the third has been developed by one of the leading figures in travel research, Stanley Plog who heads a consulting firm for travel research and is an editor for the *Journal of Travel Research*. We look at four maxims that are somewhat similar and that are gleaned from the three codes: one each from Audubon and Plog and two from the Antarctic Code.

Antarctic code

1. Antarctic visitors must not leave footprints in fragile mosses, lichens or grasses.
2. Antarctic visitors must not violate the seals', penguins' or seabirds' personal space.

- Start with a "baseline" distance of 15 ft. (5 m) from penguins, seabirds, true seals, and 60 ft. (18 m) from fur seals.
- Give the animals the right-of-way.
- Stay on the edge of, and don't walk through, animal groups.
- Back off if necessary.
- Never touch the animals.

Audubon travel ethic

3. Audubon tours must strengthen the conservation effort and enhance the integrity of the places visited.

The major concern of these three maxims is the integrity and enhancement of a specific site as well as the protection of particular animals at the location. Moreover, the Audubon maxim foregrounds the potential effects of the tour itself and seeks to ally the ecotour with those forces that "strengthen the conservation effort." This last point goes well beyond doing no harm or having zero-impact on a site and commits the tour to

assisting the conservation effort. Of course, no particulars are given to show how this might occur with specific tours, but it is clear that the Audubon Society wants to do more than the bare minimum that might be expected from any tour, namely that the host communities not be harmed. It would be interesting to follow up on some recent Audubon tours to see if and how efforts have been made to achieve this goal.

The Audubon Society's injunction to augment conservation efforts and enhance "natural integrity" apart from any instrumental value to human beings is in harmony with Albert Schweitzer's principle of reverence for life.[13] With its stress on the "natural integrity of the places visited," the Audubon maxim also approaches Aldo Leopold's emphasis on the whole community in his land ethic.[14] This last point also applies to the Antarctic Code's concerns with both the plants and animals of Antarctica to the extent of humans not even leaving footprints. In very fragile ecosystems, using Leopold's land ethic, the argument could be made that human visitors not be permitted to go to the site at all. Ecocentric holism would thwart any claims by human travelers to visit areas where their presence would compromise the stability and integrity of a particular ecosystem or even a specific plant or animal species.

Stanley Plog's maxim 1: "Protect what is natural and beautiful for the benefit of 'natives' and tourists," is based on anthropocentric principles. Protection is in service to the human community and there is no mention in this or in any of the other maxims Plog develops of inherent value in nature. Perhaps this should not be surprising since Plog's purpose in proposing the code in the first place is to develop "a code for leisure destination development to protect their futures as they grow over the years."[15] Nature, in this view, is very much the resource or commodity that should be developed for human purposes and interests. The anthropocentric foundation is clear in Plog's maxims, although these maxims may be limited in serious ways as communities attempt to resolve the complex environmental issues raised by ecotourism. That being said, Plog's efforts are important for seeing the need for a code in the first place and for arguing for the importance of cooperation between environmental groups and the tourist industry. Nevertheless, how will this cooperation take place, especially given the fact that highly contentious issues are at stake? Frameworks for negotiating discourses need to be established and this task itself will not be easy to accomplish.

Frameworks for Negotiating Discourses about Ecotourism

Efforts to cooperate in solving problems in tourism need to be much more broadly based than Plog indicates. I propose that the niches of ecotourism and adventure travel provide an experimental ground for trying out ways to negotiate difficulties and differences among interested parties. Because ecotourism and adventure travel occur on a smaller scale than other types of tourism, experimenting in these areas may help provide insights for solving environmental problems relating to tourism on a broader scale. Furthermore, analyzing types of discourse that do occur in environmental conflicts and making suggestions for negotiating these discourses may offer ways to think about and to act in contentious areas like ecotourism and adventure travel.

There is much to be gained in examining examples of discourse and public hearings to analyze the content as well as the various communication methods used by participants. Such an analysis constitutes a chapter in Tarla Rai Peterson's *Sharing the Earth*. Although this analysis does not focus on issues of ecotourism, there are many similarities that one can imagine would play out in local debates on the impacts of ecotourism. In her chapter Peterson analyzes hearings that were conducted by Agriculture Canada in

January 1990 on its plan to remove an entire bison herd from the Wood Buffalo National Park because of Brucellosis infection in the herd. The group conducting the hearings was called the Northern Diseased Bison Environmental Assessment Panel and it held seven hearings in various locations in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Peterson shows that Agriculture Canada's role in conducting the hearings was open to serious question from the start since it had already submitted its plan for the removal of the entire herd and as such was an advocate for one of the proposed solutions. As it turned out, the Panel's final recommendations were only slightly different from what Agriculture Canada had proposed in the first place. Moreover, while the final report did acknowledge some of the objections forcefully made by aboriginal and environmental groups, the report did not respond to them in any serious way.[16]

Peterson goes on to show, among other things, that certain types of discourse that she calls "technological discourse" used by the scientific experts and members of the government agencies were privileged over the "creative discourse" of the aboriginal and other local groups. The local people's long-term and close relationship with the buffalo herd was clearly not granted the same epistemological and policy value as that of the "experts" in various fields. These sharply contrasting communication methods resulted in conflicts and impasses throughout the hearings with neither side able to engage in a kind of meta-discourse that might have helped them negotiate their widely divergent assumptions, communications methods, and expectations during and after the hearings.[17]

Without going into any greater detail with this important example and Peterson's insightful analysis, it suffices to note that these kinds of hearings and panels occur with great frequency as local communities, regional, and national jurisdictions and other stakeholders attempt to discuss and decide upon issues related to development, resources, and land uses. It is easy to imagine similar panels and commissions being established to deal with the possible impacts of ecotourism and adventure travel in far-flung and wilderness regions of the world. Could these discussions be constructed so that all participants would know that the information and knowledge they bring to the table would be fully heard, considered, and appropriated in meaningful ways? Much work would need to be done prior to such hearings and panels so that stakeholders could be assured that their concerns, interests, and communication methods would be fully honored. This is asking a lot, especially given unequal power relationships that exist, for example, between so-called "expert" and "non-expert" participants. With technical and scientific discourses given greater epistemological weight and often considered "objective" over against "subjective" local and lay discourses, the meta-discourses might turn out to be just as arduous and problematic as the hearings themselves. This is not to say that such meta-discourse should not be attempted. In fact, communication theorists along with proponents of discourse ethics may do a lot to help establish frameworks for negotiating such hearings that could be adopted by the participants who are entering into a forum to debate and decide a particular issue.

Two theoretical approaches may be fruitful in developing these frameworks: first, Habermas's discourse ethics and second, some versions of feminist ethics and political theory, in particular Seyla Benhabib's reflections on Hannah Arendt's work.

Jurgen Habermas's discourse ethics is proving to be one of the most promising developments in moral theory in the last few decades. That being said, it is also both contentious and hotly debated. For our purposes here, it is not so important to enter into these debates, especially the very vital one concerning the justification of the principle of universalizability (U) that stands as the central normative principle of

Habermas's moral theory. According to this principle, a rational consensus on a proposed norm is reached and thus the norm is valid, if and only if:

> All affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of *everyone's* interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation).[18]

Again, apart from the many questions raised by the theory as a whole, what is valuable for issues and conflicts raised by ecotourism is the assertion that the interests of those actually affected by decisions are morally relevant and that moral validity depends on the real consensus of participants in actual discussions. Habermas's emphasis on intersubjectivity adds a very important dimension to this moral theory and has particular relevance for the kinds of disputes that arise in the public arena, in this case, in questions about the moral aspects of ecotourism and its impacts. On the level of moral theory, much as been made of Habermas's efforts to construct a clear way to come to rational consensus among people who do not share the same history, traditions or value systems. This effort, both problematic and fruitful, has yet to be fully exploited and it would be most helpful to flesh this out, given the nature of debates surrounding public policy issues like land and resource management and in questions generated by ecotourism. As essential as these theoretical issues are, it is also in the actual debates and discussions among participants that other thorny conflicts arise. A kind of "application discourse" needs to be developed and drawing implications from Habermas's work would advance this project.

William Rehg has done much to draw out these implications in his work on Habermas in which Rehg argues that at the point of actual, real life discussions, participants need to express a kind of "rational trust" that the legal and political procedures put in place in the spirit of the principle of universalizability (U) will be adhered to and fulfilled. This notion of rational trust seems to contain its own criteria of rationality and have its own moral weight apart from the U principle:

> On this view, the individual's confidence in the validity of a decision is based not so much on his or her overview of the relevant arguments as on the procedures for processing various arguments and how faithfully their administrators carry them out.[19]

Rehg's suggestions here go part of the way, but not far enough since he does not show how trust in the procedures can be considered rational nor does he fully elaborate on what these procedures may be. For instance, where would rituals, performance art, and storytelling fit in his definitions of rationality or how might they fit into legal and political procedures? Rehg imagines that on any particular issue many audiences may need to be involved, resulting, he claims, in dispersed consensus. Such a consensus, freely and fully arrived at by all participants, needs to be seen not merely as a compromise (i.e., the best one can hope for under the real circumstance of the debate), but as a genuine, moral decision that can be accepted by all as a morally, and not only legally or procedurally, binding. This is a tall order in the hurly-burly, real life conditions of such debates.

One way to balance what I take to be the overly rationalistic approach of Habermas's discourse ethics is found in some feminist ethical and political theories. I will mention just one that could be used to create frameworks for discussions in ecotourism.

Seyla Benhabib has drawn on the work of Hannah Arendt to propose the construction of associational public spaces. Constructing these spaces requires that all participants cultivate an "enlarged mentality" in which all learn how to reason, understand and appreciate the standpoint of other participants.[20] For Arendt and then Benhabib, such understanding is the outcome of political meeting and speaking in the public space. The multiple perspectives that constitute the political are only revealed in the speaking acts of those who are willing to engage in the public drama in the first place. Public space is thereby created by such collective and contested actions. Participants in the public space take the standpoint of others and exercise what Arendt called "transcending judgment" by which one accords each person the moral respect to consider seriously the other's point of view. This does not mean agreeing with or assuming the other standpoint by foregoing one's own; rather the challenge is to think from the other's standpoint and to listen in a genuinely open way to what the other's standpoint entails.[21] When this happens, the associational public space is enacted in which most likely conflict occurs but without competition. Storytelling, ritual, memories, and myths can all contribute to the creation of associational public space in which knowledge and testimony are expanded to include narratives of all sorts. Discourse in this setting is not judged solely on principles of rationality or objectivity, but it depends on the relational processes that are enacted within the associational public space. It is important to note that these relational processes do not presuppose the existence of a robust political space, but in fact lead to its creation through the enactment of the multiple discourses in the events themselves. In other words, the end product or the final decisions are not already set, as they were in the Northern Diseased Bison Environmental Assessment Panel hearings, but would emerge as a result of the hearings themselves. In fact, Agriculture Canada's recommendation to remove the entire bison herd was made before the hearings actually took place.[22] In the new framework presented here, both the technological and creative discourses would be accorded parity within the context of the enlarged mentality of all participants who are committed to creating an associational public space. Negotiating discourses in this associational public space could be a more fruitful enterprise than the agonistic and competitive models currently in use. Conflicts centering on ecotourism and adventure travel would constitute interesting cases in these associational public spaces that also used norms generated from discourse ethics and feminist ethical theories.

In addition to the principles delineated above from Habermas's discourse ethics and from Benhabib and Arendt's works, actual discussions on ecotourism and adventure travel should include the following features:

- As has already occurred in many debates—discussions need to be multi-disciplinary in approach, including but not limited to the tourist industry, environmental organizations, environmental studies, government agencies, representatives of local populations, ethicists, and public policy makers.
- All factors impinging upon a particular tourist destination need to be considered: economic, environmental (in the most complete sense), social, political, ethical, and aesthetic. An agreed upon method of environmental accounting needs to be devised.
- All stakeholders participate in debates, discussions, and decision-making.
- Working groups accommodate "expert" and "non-expert" discourse and ways of thinking. Non-linear discourse is accorded due weight in discussion and decision-making, e.g., traditional myths, storytelling, rituals, and religious beliefs are included in significant ways and not simply as tokenism.

- Advocacies are delineated, i.e., who speaks for non-rational, non-verbal and inanimate parts of the community. This is addressed and resolved before discussions take place.
- Indigenous peoples with claims to specific sites have the right to participate or not in such discussions and decision-making. They may refuse to participate and withhold their territory and specific sites from any development or contacts they consider unsuitable and inappropriate. As Barry Lopez remarked in a talk he gave recently at the New York City Public Library, we may invite the local people to meet us at the trailhead.[23] They may choose to accept or reject the invitation.
- Models for conducting discussion and decision-making are decided upon before discussion of issues occurs. Facilitators, discussion leaders and group process consultants who have no stake in the issues are given the task to implement and monitor the discussions and decision-making.

Parts of these frameworks are already being enacted. Nature organizations, ecotourism operators, indigenous peoples, public officials and others are creating and participating in the process of formulating agreements and codes for responsible tourism. There is no doubt that working to create associational public spaces and working within these frameworks will be difficult and time-consuming. It will also require good will, openness, and honesty on all sides. However, with such compelling issues at stake I believe that we can aim for no less than to attempt to create such public spaces within which fruitful and meaningful discourses can occur and from which good policy decisions may emerge.

Conclusions

As is clear from the analysis so far, not only are there many serious issues to address in the substance of ecotourism, but also in the processes themselves that need to be created to address them. The discourse ethics of Habermas augmented by the feminist political and ethical theories of Benhabib and Arendt are fruitful theoretical approaches that also have the room to deal with policy and practical applications as these debates and discourses get underway. Far from exhausting these possibilities, this essay has simply opened up the connections between these fruitful theoretical approaches and an area of environmental concern that is just beginning to be acknowledged—ecotourism. The connections between theories and their applications are themselves open to scrutiny and investigation, but in this case not as an ungrounded abstraction but as carefully integrated in each step of a long and arduous, but nonetheless exciting, journey. This essay is presented in the spirit of getting the gear ready for the journey.

Another important point is the need for greater environmental education and public awareness about both the pleasures and ecological perils of tourism. Web sites and the Internet (list serves, chat rooms, etc.) are excellent tools for education in this broad sense. With our students, we should carefully combine research, field work, and media of all sorts to help them become environmentally responsible global citizens.

With regard to ecotourism and adventure travel, I propose the formation of councils or commissions that would grant a kind of "certification" or "seal of approval" that ecotour operators may apply for to use in their promotion and marketing. Then travelers may decide whether or not they will patronize ecotours based on the environmental track records of the tour operators. Such certification could also be made available to ecotour destinations. Travelers would then have the confidence that the local authorities in particular locations are doing everything in their power to maintain and enhance the

complete ecosystems in their jurisdictions. (This mechanism could be analogous to BCU—British Canoe Union certification that is given to sea kayak instructors.)

There are other courses of action open to interested parties. National and international environmental groups lobby parliaments and legislatures for better environmental regulations and enforcement. These are daunting and difficult tasks, but such legal improvements are needed for long-term solutions. International treaties and trade agreements also need to consider the short and long-range environmental consequences of tourism in negotiations and regulations.

Finally, one can take to the courts as the Sierra Club is now doing in bringing a suit against the state of Hawaii. This is a very interesting case to watch. The Hawaii chapter of the Sierra Club is suing the state to require it to perform an environmental assessment before the state grants $114 million to the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau for marketing and promoting tourism.[24] Hawaii's popularity as a tourist destination has been declining and in such a location where tourism is a major industry, declining revenues have significant economic consequences. However, such decreases may also have a positive side—they may give the state some breathing room to begin to tackle some of the long-range issues of environmental quality, sustainable development and tourism. The suit by the Sierra Club, if successful, may in fact force the state of Hawaii to do just that.

In the best of all possible worlds, litigation would give way to persuasion and the threats of force and fines yield to reasoned arguments. We all know, however, that we do not live in such a world. Therefore, we need healthy doses of persuasion and penalties along with publicly supported laws and regulations. As Hannah Arendt remarked in another context, what is called for is nothing less than "to think what we are doing"[25] and in this task, the vigorous debates about ethics and ecotourism may yield some surprising results.

Notes

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Note on contributor

Judith Chelius Stark, Ph.D. is an associate professor of philosophy and former director of the University Honors Program at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J. She has edited (with Joanna V. Scott) *Hannah Arendt: Love and Saint Augustine* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) and is editor of the forthcoming volume of essays *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine* (Penn State Press). She recently participated in an NEH Institute on "Ethics and the Environment: Alaska as a Case Study" at the University of Alaska Anchorage (May–June, 2001). In her spare time Stark enjoys sea kayaking and birding.