"BECAUSE IT IS OURS": COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

By

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Dedicado a los miembros de la Comunidad Nativa de Infierno.
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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

“BECAUSE IT IS OURS”: COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

By
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August 2000

Chairperson: Dr. Marianne Schmink
Major Department: Anthropology Department

This ethnography of a community ecotourism lodge in Madre de Dios, southeastern Peru emerges at a time when concern over the destruction of the earth’s rain forests has captured the attention of the public, policy makers, and scholars. Many conservationists believe that ecotourism may help protect rain forests and traditional cultures while also meeting the economic needs of local residents.

Ecotourism is described in the thesis as a special kind of market integration for rural communities. For one, encounters between hosts and guests in ecotourism are transactions that involve more than the exchange of money for goods or services; they also involve the trade of expectations and ideas about nature and culture. Second, unlike other paths to development, ecotourism usually relies on the maintenance of tradition rather than a move away from it. Third, when ecotourism is community-based, it essentially brings the market home, and this allows for different ways of participating in
the market economy without necessarily or irreversibly disrupting normal livelihoods or social relations.

The main findings are:

1. Economic analysis is necessary but not sufficient for understanding the impact of ecotourism on people and forests. When ecotourism is participatory, that is, when local hosts are involved as decisions-makers as well as employees, ecotourism can be a transforming experience rather than simply an economic incentive. For this reason, attention to process in ecotourism (i.e., how and why people are participating) is as important as measuring results (i.e., how much people are earning, or how many locals are employed).

2. New attention from tourists and other outsiders, as well as economic benefits, can motivate people to protect resources and local traditions. When ecotourism is introduced to an area, it has the effect of holding a mirror to people. The mirror is a metaphor for the collective gaze of visitors filled with expectations about how a place should look, and how locals should act. These gazes and expectations can prompt people to become more reflexive about themselves and their communities, and to grapple with questions that will ultimately affect their future.

3. Understanding of the impacts of tourism can be enhanced by paying attention to heterogeneity within local communities, revealing not only who is participating and why, but also how different kinds of participation lead to different outcomes across individuals and households.
CHAPTER ONE
THE ENCHANTMENT OF ECOTOURISM

7:00 p.m., July 1998

It is dinner time at Posada Amazonas when Raul pulls up a chair and takes his place at the head of the table. The others have arrived earlier, and now they’re sipping manzanilla tea as they wait to begin. The dining room is arched by a cathedral-like ceiling of woven palm thatch, and everywhere, the branches of trees twist and curl over the wooden railings. By now, the screech owls have begun their calls, and somewhere nearby, a bamboo rat adds a strangely syncopated message to the din of frogs and insects. Lightning blinks on the dark horizon, signaling another cold front with rain, the third friaje this season. “The moon is growing,” someone said, “The weather always changes with the moon.”

Raul is wearing a long ceremonial necklace made from huayruro and palm seeds, a noticeable addition to his navy blue t-shirt and faded denim pants. He is the son of an Ese Eja man, the president of his community, and the leader of the Ecotourism Committee gathered this evening. Invited to join, I sit at the corner of the table, between Rosa and Diego. Julio nods and moves the kerosene lamp closer to me. (“In case you want to write.”) They call the meeting to order, and the kitchen staff brings out the first course: bowls of hot sopa de zapallo.
As they wait to be served, they reminisce on how far they've come since May 1996. It was then that they first agreed to sign the contract to build the lodge. "I didn't think we could do it," Javier admits, looking around the table.

"I knew we could, but I had no idea how much work it would take."

Manuel, one of the leaders, adds, "Yes, but I think it would have taken even more without the partnership."

Raul clears his voice, indicating he is ready to begin. "Well, now we're the owners, and tonight we have a lot on the agenda. I hear some of the families upriver want to build their own lodge. I have some ideas about how we might be able to help..."

At the next table, a young biology student from Lima, now working as a tour guide, is describing the history of the lodge to a group of twelve American tourists. "As one of the first joint ventures of its kind in Peru," he gestures, "this lodge is a kind of experiment in ecotourism. The people from the local community, Infierno, participate in running the place. They work as waiters, housekeepers, and boatdrivers—like the people you've already met. But they also participate as owners and managers."

Pausing for the soup, he continues, "The Community began working in partnership with Rainforest Expeditions a couple of years ago to build the lodge. They signed a contract, which states that the two partners would split profits, 60% to the community, and 40% to the company. The management, they agreed to divide fifty-fifty. When the contract ends in 20 years, the community will have the option to continue, or split from Rainforest Expeditions and take full control..."

"Wait," a woman in khaki interrupts, "I'm not sure I understand. Where is the community? I don't see anyone living here."
"Technically, this is the community. It’s just that it’s very big—almost 10,000 hectares straddling both sides of the river. We passed everyone’s homes today as we came up the river. The people who live here are part of an indigenous group called the Ese Eja, and they share the land with migrant and ribereño families from the Andes and other parts of the Amazon. By the way, the ‘Ecotourism Committee’—they’re like a ‘board of directors’ from the community—is having a meeting at that other table right now."

I see the tourists leaning over, and someone comments, “Seems like a good opportunity for the community. But Rainforest Expeditions has a huge responsibility to be fair.”

“True,” the guide concedes, “but honestly, I’m more worried about conservation. This area has the highest level of biodiversity recorded anywhere in the world. I just hope the lodge will offer enough income and jobs to convince people to stop hunting and farming. Already, they’ve shown a lot of interest in protecting the Harpy eagles and the Giant otters, and I think it’s because they know tourists like you will pay to see them.”

I overhear them and think, yes, that’s the basic idea, but there is more to say. This project has really changed people. If the tourists could listen to the conversation at this table, they would hear the hope and sense of accomplishment in people’s voices as they talk about the project and about their futures. The real success of the tourism project adds up to something more significant than the handful of jobs or the extra money it has generated.
Introduction

This ethnography of Posada Amazonas, a community-based ecotourism lodge in the Department of Madre de Dios in southeastern Peru, emerges at a time when concern over the destruction of the earth’s tropical ecosystems, particularly rain forests, has captured public attention. The magnitude of the loss is the greatest the Earth has known in four billion years (Wilson 1992). As species and habitats are disappearing, so too is the cultural diversity of the world’s tropical areas (Alcorn 1993).

Many conservationists believe that ecotourism may help protect rain forests and traditional cultures while also meeting the economic needs of local residents (Boo 1990; Cater and Lowman 1994; Lindberg 1991; Sherman and Dixon 1991; Ziffer 1989). The Amazon has long lured travelers in search of tropical landscapes, wildlife, and exotic peoples. But more recently the Amazon has become a popular destination for "ecotourists" who seek not only adventure, but also the opportunity to learn about rain forest ecology and culture, and possibly even to contribute to their conservation (Castner 1990; Dobkin de Rios 1994; Linden 1991). The hope for many is that their vacation dollars will give local residents incentives to protect forests and maintain cultural traditions.

Ecotourism is many things to many people. For the Ecotourism Society, it is “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local peoples.”

An expanding group of new tourism companies now claim to go easy on the environment and on indigenous peoples, even as they strive for profit.

---

1 Honey (1999) offers a concise summary of the many variations on this theme. “In all the them,” she notes, “ecotourism is distinct from ‘nature,’ ‘adventure,’ ‘wildlife,’ and virtually all other types of tourism because it focuses not simply on the type of leisure activity, but on tourism’s impact and the responsibilities of both the tourist and those in the tourism industry” (p. 4, italics mine). See also Eadington and Smith (1992) for a helpful review of alternative forms of tourism.
These companies label their excursions variously as "ecotourism," "community-based tourism" "cultural tourism," or simply "alternative tourism." Relative to other activities, such as hunting, logging, or agriculture, ecotourism seems to have a low impact on forests (Groom et al. 1991), and, ideally, revenues from tourism can be channeled into conservation. Some scholars argue, however, that too much tourism, particularly if it is unmonitored and unregulated, can spoil natural areas and disturb wildlife (De Groot 1983; Giannecchini 1993).

Development specialists also have mixed views about the impacts of ecotourism. They worry that tourism will contaminate the cultural identity of people in host destinations. In many ways, tourism is a kind of imperialism that can overpower traditional institutions and destroy local culture (Bruner 1987; Mansperger 1995; Nuñez 1989; Rossel 1988). Most insidiously, tourism can commoditize culture and render it meaningless (Greenwood 1989). Yet, some scholars suggest that commoditization can help protect or even revive traditional practices and beliefs that would otherwise be lost (Cohen 1988; Van den Berghe 1994). Some suggest that tourism may even encourage local hosts to develop new and empowering forms of expression and self-representation (Bendix 1989; Evans-Pritchard 1989; Lanfant et. al. 1995).

In sum, ecotourism lies at the intersection of two discourses: one on the loss of cultural diversity; the other on the loss of biological diversity. For both problems, ecotourism represents the potential for a solution as well as the possibility of disaster. It is no wonder that conservationists and development specialists are talking to each other in conferences, journals, classrooms, and in the field about how best to implement ecotourism, and then carefully measure the impacts.
A New Trend in an Old Paradigm

Though ecotourism is a fairly recent trend, our explorations of the impacts of ecotourism can best be illuminated by reading from the past. Many of our mixed thoughts on ecotourism today can be traced to yesterday’s debates over development and change in rural, traditional societies. For contemporary conservationists and development specialists, the market is either the solution or the cause of the ecological degradation and the loss of cultural tradition. But, for more than a century, social scientists have grappled with the same themes under the guises of “evolution,” “progress,” “acculturation,” “modernization,” “development,” and “social change.” These themes have appeared most commonly in studies that examined the impacts of capitalism and market integration on traditional societies.

In the thesis, I will analyze ecotourism as a special kind of market integration for people in the Amazon. For some communities, tourism represents the first full-fledged introduction to the market economy, but for most other communities, tourism is the way to greater market integration. Places off the proverbial beaten path are increasingly opened to tourism as the international economy becomes more interconnected globally, and as transnational networks of transportation and communication are improved (Lanfant et al. 1995). As a result, tourists, guides, journalists, photographers, researchers, project managers, donors, and other outsiders are gaining access to even the most remote destinations around the world, including the Amazon (Buckley 1987; Gann 1995; Mitchell 1987; O’Rourke 1993), the Himalayas (Abram et al. 1997; Jayal 1986; McEachern 1995), and even the Antarctic (Hall and Johnston 1995; Vicuna 1992; Vidas 1993).
Within the tourism industry, ecotourism has become the fastest growing sector. The World Tourism Organization (1995) estimates that nearly 600 million people per year travel internationally as tourists. Tourism is the world's number one employer, earning US$4 trillion-plus annually, and competing only with oil as the world's largest legitimate business (Honey 1999). Greenwood (1989) has suggested that tourism is "the largest scale movement of goods, services, and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen" (p. 171). As the industry grows, ecotourism is becoming a significant catalyst of economic development and socio-political change in rural communities throughout the world.

Three Questions Relevant to the Impacts of Tourism

My thoughts on ecotourism are influenced by several theories related to the concepts of change, development, and progress. These themes form the basis of anthropology as a discipline, and I believe they are well represented in the recent subject of ecotourism and its impacts on local communities. Two schools of thought have been especially important in helping me understand the significance of ecotourism as a particular kind of market integration. One is the model of sustainable development, which I perceive as a re-vision of earlier modernization models for development; and, the second is political ecology. Both of these paradigms are relevant to ecotourism because they address the impact of development on traditional societies, as well as how development ultimately changes people's interactions with nature.

Three questions I have gleaned from sustainable development (and, by extension, modernization) and political ecology are: 1) What happens when traditional societies are newly integrated with the market, particularly through development projects? 2) How is improved economic welfare for people linked (or not) to the conservation of natural
resources? 3) How do shifts in power among different stakeholders in an ecosystem affect the ways in which natural resources are exploited? In the following sections, I will characterize the scholarly debates around each of the three questions.

**Question 1: Tradition, Markets, And Change**

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many scholars tried to make sense of the social changes capitalism was causing in rural, traditional societies. The paradigms that emerged from this earlier research --precursors to our current ideas about ecotourism and its impacts on local communities and forests—were, in turn, influenced by the concepts of evolution and progress. Charles Lyell (1830), a geographer, sparked early thinking on evolutionary change when he argued that scholars could observe the Earth itself as a kind of end result from which to learn about patterns of change over time. It was Lyell who suggested, “the present is the key to the past.” Building from this, Auguste Comte (1854) and Charles Darwin (1859) expounded on the principles of evolution and launched a new agenda, which ultimately pervaded most other scientific disciplines for decades to come. Most prominently, Karl Marx brought evolution to the study of politics, economy, and society by arguing that material forces introduced through capitalism, and the conflicts that arose from them, drove social evolution.

Emile Durkheim (1893) also attributed social evolution to the capitalist market. He theorized that societies evolved from a simple, nonspecialized, “mechanical” form, toward a highly complex, specialized “organic” form. In the first, people generally act and think alike, performing the same work tasks, and having the same group-oriented goals; in the latter, people are no longer tied to one another, work becomes more complex, and social bonds are impersonal. Ferdinand Tonnies (1887) also characterized social evolution as linked to the market. Like Durkheim, he perceived two basic social
groups, “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft.” In one, the “community,” people interact together on the basis of reciprocity, adhering always to a collective sentiment. In the other, the “city,” people interact on the basis of competition, and are guided by self-motivation and egocentrism.

Max Weber (1904) also described shifts from one type of society to another as the capitalist market gains greater influence. Weber argued that societies become more rationalizing and bureaucratizing as they move towards modernity. In modern societies, what once seemed governed by chance, feeling, and passion becomes calculable, predictable, and ultimately, “disenchanting.” Robert Redfield (1941) developed a model of progressive cultural change between five communities on a “folk-urban” continuum. He found the urban pole characterized by greater heterogeneity, cultural disorganization, individualization, and secularization.

In all of these theories, from Marx to Redfield, market integration was seen as causing a break from tradition and a transition to a new kind of society. Beyond bringing about economic changes, such as new opportunities for wage labor, price shifts, and higher incomes, market integration was also perceived as prompting changes in values, cultural identity, and social relations.

Building from these ideas, and convinced that the persistence of community and traditional values was the problem to poverty and backwardness, post-World War II modernization theorists (e.g., Dalton 1967; Foster 1973) blamed religion, ethnicity, kinship, and other trappings of the past for the lack of progress and economic development in many contemporary societies. Modernizationists advocated large-scale transfers of Western technology to what they identified as the “Third World” to increase
per capita income, and to provide for “basic needs,” including education and health (Banuri 1991). The transfer of such development packages, full of the latest ideas and technologies, was perceived as a way to inculcate a set of modern values and habits among peoples in traditional societies. Every step away from tradition was a step toward progress. Rostow (1960), in fact, described stages of development, through which all societies needed to pass before they could eventually “take off” into modernity. Modernizationists plotted entire societies along unilinear trajectories of evolution, and identified them as ‘underdeveloped,’ ‘developing,’ and ‘developed’ (Escobar 1991, 1992).

From these theories, I have extracted the first question I mentioned earlier: What happens when traditional societies are newly integrated with the market, particularly through development projects? I believe the current debate about ecotourism—a kind of market integration and increasingly the typical development project funded by non-governmental and bilateral aid agencies—and its impact on communities is rooted in these older debates about modernization and the impact of capitalism on traditional societies.

**Question 2: Concern for Sustainability**

The second major question embedded in current discussions about ecotourism is: How is improved economic welfare for people linked (or not) to the conservation of natural resources? This question too emerges from a long line of scholarship on modernization and development, though with some significant changes.

During the 1970s, modernization theory was widely criticized, especially by dependency theorists from Latin America (e.g., Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Frank 1969), who pointed out that, even when modernization programs led to national growth, most of
the wealth was concentrated among elite sectors of society, leaving the vast majority of
the population poor and marginalized. By the 1980’s, new concerns were moving to the
forefront for policy makers, project planners, and social scientists involved in
development. Modernization was seen by many as a failure: economic indicators showed
that the poorest of the poor were not better off, and meanwhile, a different but related
problem was taking precedence, specifically, the accelerating rate of natural habitat and
species loss.

Rather than discard the development endeavor altogether, people began to rethink
the approach. In particular, they began to consider how development could be planned
from the bottom up, taking into consideration local factors, capitalizing on tradition and
community ties rather than discounting them, and incorporating “quality of life”
indicators as the criteria of success, rather than total per capita income and/or the simple
transfer of technology.

At about the same time modernization was under reconsideration, policy makers
and citizens in tropical countries around the world began to view conventional tourism as
a failed development strategy. Rather than alleviate poverty, tourism was introducing
new kinds of social problems, such as currency black markets, drugs, and prostitution. In
addition, conventional tourism was associated with luxury spending, overcrowding, and
pollution, all of which were compounding environmental degradation in the developing
world. In the meantime, profits from tourism were being siphoned off to industry leaders
in developed countries. In light of these problems, the 1980s marked a search for
alternative, cleaner and greener forms of tourism (Honey 1994; see Munt 1994).
With new concern for the environment, development scholars began to consider not only how market integration was affecting people in rural societies, but also how such changes were affecting the ways in which people were treating the environment. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, development goals began to overlap significantly with conservation goals. Specialists on both sides, particularly biologists, economists, and anthropologists, began to outline how and why increased market integration could be used to improve human welfare while also adding incentives to protect the environment. Scholars asked questions like, “How does participation in new wage labor influence people’s livelihoods and their decisions to clear forests?” and “How does adding a price value to natural resources change people’s incentives to manage and protect those resources?” and “How does poverty (or wealth), in general, influence conservation and degradation of the environment?”

Some scholars began to suggest that the market could improve people’s lives by allowing them to earn more income, gain access to better education and healthcare, and lower their population size, all of which would improve chances for conservation (Godoy, in press). Others argued that integration to the market would lead to new problems, including exposure to foreign diseases and social ills, shifts in livelihood, increased social conflict, and a general decline in people’s welfare, all of which would further fuel degradation (ibid.).

A framework for “sustainable development” arose from these debates (see Brundtland 1987; IUCN 1980; 1991) with a key premise that economic welfare and conservation must be compatible for either to succeed over many generations. In this framework, one way to reconcile the two goals of conservation and development is to
account fully for the economic value of natural resources, and to ensure economic
benefits for local stewards who protect natural resources. It is this premise that influences
our relatively recent hopes about ecotourism.

Jeffrey McNeely’s book, *Economics and Biological Diversity* (1988), is a good
example to illustrate the sustainable development model. McNeely argued that the most
appropriate method to approach conservation is through economics, and that the shift
from over-exploitation of resources to sustainability will occur through "economic
inducements" (p. vii). In 1991, John Robinson and Kent Redford applied this concept to
the conservation of wildlife in the edited volume, *Neotropical Wildlife Use*. "Unless
wildlife has some use to people," they suggested, "then wildlife will not be valued by
people. If wildlife has no value, then wildlife and its habitat will be destroyed to make
way for other land uses" (p. 3). In a second volume in 1992, Christine Padoch and Kent
Redford elaborated on the model and argued that placing a monetary value on forest
resources may give people new incentives to conserve it. One contributor wrote,
"Knowing that their economic future lies in the sustained use of [xate, chicle, and
allspice], the families who harvest these resources [in the Petén region of Guatemala] are
strong promoters of forest protection" (Nations 1992:214).

To test empirically these ideas, numerous studies appeared in the late 1980s and
early 1990s using measurements of the economic value of biodiversity in tropical rain
forests (see Godoy et al. 1993; Gutierrez and Pearce 1992; Peters et al. 1989; Pearce
1992; Ruitenbeek 1989). These projects showed, in economic terms, that biodiversity is
more valuable intact than destroyed to clear way for agriculture, cattle, roads, or timber
plantations. Again, the idea was to bolster the perceived economic value of forests, and thus give people greater incentives to protect it.

A similar model was applied to the analysis of tourism. To prove that tourism was economically viable and therefore a potentially feasible strategy for long-term sustainable use of natural resources, Mendelsohn and Tobias (1991) applied a resource valuation framework to tourism in Costa Rica. They asked: How much rainforest, as expressed in dollars and cents, is tourism protecting? They calculated the value tourism was generating for a specific plot of land in Costa Rica, and compared it to the much lower regular market price for land to show that tourism is a better and cleaner development option for people (see also Menkhaus and Lober 1995). Webster (1984) applied this approach to Amboseli National Park in Kenya, where tourism had become the leading foreign exchange earner, and estimated that each lion was worth $27,000 per year in visitor attraction, and each elephant herd was worth $610,000 per year (cited in McNeely 1988:20).

The criteria for determining “sustainability” of a development project is highly subjective. Indeed, the sustainability of anything shifts depending on scales of time and space, and on who’s doing the measuring. For this reason, most policy makers and academics use the term “sustainable development” with caution. Yet, the concept behind the words continues to inform policies and projects throughout the world, especially in the tropics, where accelerated losses of biodiversity are coupled with extreme poverty.

Ecotourism is often recommended as a key “sustainable development” solution for achieving conservation and the alleviation of poverty. In a long history of scholarly thought as to the how capitalism affects traditional societies, ecotourism is touted as a
new brand of capitalism, a kind of “anti-industry.” I perceive tourism as an unusual form of market integration for rural traditional communities for three main reasons: one, interactions between buyers and sellers in tourism involve more than the exchange of money for goods and services—they also involve expectations and cultural expressions; two, the long-term economic success of tourism relies on the maintenance of tradition rather than a move away from it; and three, tourism is often community-based, and therefore has the effect of bringing the market to the community rather than forcing people to abandon entirely their homelands and livelihoods. I will elaborate on each of these aspects later in this chapter.

**Question 3: Making Ecotourism Participatory**

A third question I have found relevant to the current debates about the impacts of ecotourism is: How do shifts in power among different stakeholders in an ecosystem affect the ways in which natural resources are exploited? This question arises from a framework of political ecology, which is the analysis of how social, political, and economic dynamics over time and at multiple levels, from nations to regions, and from communities to households, affect the ways in which people use land and other natural resources (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Schmink and Wood 1992; Schmink 1999; Painter and Durham 1995; Peluso 1993; Stonich 1993). Often, political ecology has been used in the context of development policies in tropical developing countries where conservation concerns are greatest (e.g., Peluso in Indonesia; Schmink and Wood in the Brazilian Amazon). The point of such analysis is to understand how social relations of power are tied to decisions about how to use natural resources.

Political ecologists have asked us to consider carefully how changes in relations of production condition resource use. In the Tambopata region, for example, Jane
Collins (1984) has explained how progressive limitations over time of the options available to small farmers create a situation in which their only response to declining productivity of land is to make more intense investments of labor into expanding production on unused land.

In addition to factoring in relations of production and power to understand resource use, political ecologists have also emphasized attention on the individual rational actor. In the framework of political ecology, people in rural, traditional societies are not blindly following cultural customs that keep them in homeostasis with the environment, or, alternatively that force them down one-way paths to environmental degradation (Stonich 1993). Rather, traditional peoples are similar to modern, westernized peoples in that they have conscious and rational ways of exploiting the resources in their midst (Schmink 1994). And as rational actors, indigenous peoples' choices are often mediated by political and economic policies and by social relations of power.

In adopting an actor-oriented approach to understanding relations between people and nature, political ecologists have highlighted differences within cultural communities, households, and families in terms of how people interact with the environment and in the ways they use particular natural resources (Rocheleau 1995; Rocheleau et al. 1996). These differences are shaped by gender roles, which are culturally constructed and that change according to men's and women's age, ethnicity, wealth, and life stage, and many other factors (Schmink 1996). With this insight, political ecologists have highlighted important differences in resource use between people sharing the same physical environment, village, and household.
Context is especially important to political ecologists, for the conviction is that people do not make resource use decisions in a vacuum; rather they are rational actors who base their decisions on political, economic, and social incentives. In *Contested Frontiers of the Amazon*, Schmink and Wood (1992) offered detailed accounts of how politics, social movements, development policies, and conflicts over resources shaped events in the Brazilian Amazon over several decades. Attention to context in a political ecology analysis helps illuminate how competition over resources between traditional peoples and other social groups with varying access to economic and political power can affect land and resource use. In the case of Brazil, national policies that made official land titling procedures confusing or arbitrary compelled ranchers, squatters, and miners to used forest clearing as a way to assert their claims to land (Schmink and Wood 1992). Because squatters were not able to compete against large investors, many were resigned to move on, clear new plots of land, and eventually sell out to incoming investors. This process resulted in rampant deforestation.

Together with the paradigms of modernization and sustainable development, political ecology forms the theoretical basis of recent strategies for applying ecotourism to the dual problems of poverty and environmental degradation. Two lessons from political ecology are particularly useful to understanding the impacts of tourism on local communities. One is that shifts in power between state agents for tourism and local residents or between tour operators and local residents, stakeholders in tourism, such as, between tour operators and local residents in a host destination, ultimately affect the ways in which resources in the host site are exploited.

Several authors (Yu et al 1997; Bookbinder et al 1998) have noted that too often
the connections between tourism, local economic benefits, and conservation are not achieved. The failure to link tourism with social welfare and environmental protection has often been because local communities were not been involved (Honey 1999). More to the point, tourism has usually been imposed on local communities rather than invited, and when local residents have been involved, it has usually been after the fact, and typically as cultural displays, rather than from the beginning as planners and managers.

Today, local participation in ecotourism is gaining new importance (Eadington and Smith 1992; Torres 1996). Throughout the Amazon local communities are joining in partnerships with government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private tour companies to plan tourism strategies and develop new attractions for visitors. As a result, citizens are gaining increasing control over how tourism affects their communities. These shifts are making a difference for natural resources, as well as for local residents.

Susan Stonich (1998) has applied a political ecology framework to the development of tourism in Honduras. She found that devolution of decision making and management roles from private tour operators and the government to local residents has made a difference in conservation outcomes. When local residents have more authority to decide how resources should be managed over the long term, conservation is affected simply because locals (rather than tour operators or politicians or even tourists) are most often the direct users of resources. Locals ultimately decide, for example, whether a macaw will be hunted or protected to show to tourists, or whether a hectare of forest will be burned for agriculture or kept standing for use as tourists trails.

A second lesson from political ecology is the acknowledgement of differences within communities, households, and families with regard to how and why people
interact with the environment in particular ways. Resource use is often defined by social
dynamics, relations of power, and culturally-informed roles and responsibilities
(Rocheleau 1995; Rocheleau et al. 1996; Schmink 1999). For these reasons, tourism
affects individuals within communities and within households differentially, and these
differences ultimately affect the conservation or degradation of natural resources.

Gender is one important social variable that determines who within a host community participates in tourism. Researchers have found that perceptions about traditional men’s and women’s roles can determine who among a host community does what in tourism (Swain 1989; 1995; Wilkinson and Pratiwi 1995), the conditions under which they work (Levy and Lerch 1991), and how they are received by tourists (de la Cadena 1991; Kinnaird and Hall 1994). By examining these kinds of differences in how and why people in host destinations work in tourism, we can discover not only what motivates hosts, but also what constrains or compels participation in tourism, and finally, how such participation affects resource use.

Ecotourism as a Special Kind of Market Integration

I have suggested that we can examine the impacts of tourism by first reviewing earlier scholarship on modernization, development, and market integration in traditional societies. I will also argue throughout the thesis that tourism, especially in its recent alternative forms, is a special kind of market integration for three reasons. One is that interactions between hosts and guests in tourism involve more than the simple exchange of money for goods or services. They also involve expectations, stereotypes, and expressions of ethnic identity and culture—these become the currencies and commodities that are exchanged between producers and consumers, or between hosts and guests. The
inter-subjective perceptions of what’s going on between hosts and guests (i.e., what we think they’re thinking, and what they think we’re thinking), and how both sides are influenced by the encounters, are not easily captured by economic analyses alone.

A second factor that makes tourism different from other paths to market integration is that it relies on the maintenance of tradition rather than a move away from it. Historically, the key to development and economic success lay in new innovation and technology, along with the adoption of Western values (i.e., efficiency, individuality, forward-thinking). Yet, in tourism, what makes a place or a people most marketable or attractive to tourists is its mark of authenticity. Things that are “authentic,” or literally, “worthy of trust, reliance, or belief” are rarely associated with technology and Western values—at least not in rural Amazonian communities, or in other similar kinds of places tourists like to visit. In fact, things tend to lose their authenticity when they are commercialized or made popular in the modern market economy.

A third reason tourism is a special kind of market integration is related to location: when tourism is community-based, it has the effect of bringing the market to the community. This difference means that people can participate in the market economy of tourism in a multiplicity of ways, without necessarily or irreversibly disrupting their normal livelihoods or social relations.

With these special features of ecotourism in mind, I have formulated my overall thesis question as the following: How does ecotourism, as a special kind of market integration, change the economic activities and values of people in host communities? How do such changes ultimately affect how people use and think about natural resources? In the thesis, I will analyze the particular case of the Native Community of
Infierno and their project with Rainforest Expeditions, Posada Amazonas, to explain how these features of ecotourism have influenced the kinds of impacts tourism has caused within the community. I will use a case study format, relying on quantitative and qualitative data, along with insights from fieldwork and participant observation over a natural experiment of four years, to challenge and uphold various assumptions about what ecotourism can do for conservation and local communities. More specifically, I will describe how people's household economic activities, such as farming and hunting, and their values, especially those related to ethnic identity, have changed over the first few years of tourism in Infierno.

**The Promise of Ecotourism**

Though ecotourism is a special kind of market integration for the reasons I have mentioned, ecotourism is often characterized in ways that might be used to describe any kind of development project. The success of ecotourism is typically summed up in terms of new income and jobs that can be used as incentives for local residents to protect habitats and species. A recent brochure from Conservation International, for example, suggests that “ecotourism is an effective economic alternative to destroying the rainforest for quick monetary gain. It offers jobs and business opportunities to local community members while creating an appreciation for the natural attractions and cultural heritage of the country” (Conservation International 1998, italics mine). Similarly, a Cable News Network (CNN) article reported, “The ecotourism boom has created hundreds of new jobs and put money in the pockets of local residents. Environmentalists hope that as the industry grows—creating more jobs and bringing

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more money to the Amazon—fewer Brazilians will feel compelled to cut, clear and burn the world’s largest rain forest” (CNN Travel News 1999).

Two biologists who have worked in Madre de Dios for many years also have highlighted the jobs and new income offered through ecotourism. In a chapter titled, “Tourism as a Sustained Use of Wildlife,” Charles Munn and co-authors advise that tourism “should extend the economic benefits of development to a broad base of the local human population through employment, compensation fees, or the development of social services” (Groom et al. 1991:393-394, italics mine). In a 1997 article, “Ecotourism and Conservation in Amazonian Peru,” Douglas Yu and co-authors write, “ecotourism creates a self-sustaining cycle of increased tourism, increased incomes, and increased incentives for habitat protection, which can include foregone hunting and farming” (p. 130).

I will argue that our hopes about ecotourism, namely that new jobs and new income will create incentives for conservation, are somewhat simplistic. Using the case of Infierno, I will show that ecotourism may be important more for what it does to people’s values than for what it does to their pockets. I have already argued that ecotourism is a special case of market integration because it makes commodities of culture and nature. Because the products sold—a people and a place—are also the context in which they are sold, tourism gives rise to a set of circumstances that would not be found in other kinds of material transactions, such as in the sale of a sack of manioc, or the purchase of a barrel of brazil nuts. Tourism involves the sale of one’s identity, one’s culture, one’s home, one’s environment, one’s self for outside consumption and

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3 I learned much about the discourse of ecotourism not from refereed articles in academia, but from the gray literature produced by conservation and development organizations, travel magazines, and brochures.
enjoyment, and therefore, tourism necessarily leads to self reflection, and a re-cognition of one’s condition. I will illustrate the ways in which ecotourism can transform people in positive ways by increasing their power, confidence, and environmental awareness, more than just make them richer or give them jobs.

**Four Insights about the Community-based Ecotourism**

Throughout the thesis, my interpretations about the impacts of ecotourism in Infierno will be framed in four main insights. The first insight is that economic analysis is necessary but not sufficient for understanding the full impact of ecotourism on people and forests. When ecotourism is participatory, it is more than an economic incentive for protecting natural resources; it is also a fundamental change in how people perceive themselves and their environment. Exchanges between hosts and guests can signal transformations more than just market transactions.

Proponents of ecotourism argue that putting a price value on natural resources is the strategy to protect them; conversely, ignoring the economic value of certain species can place them in greater danger of extinction. Yet this argument implies that the only incentive in ecotourism is economic. The case of Infierno demonstrates that the opportunity to participate, the ceding of the authority to decide how local resources should be used, can be a powerful incentive as well. Community based ecotourism does not necessarily need to generate a lot of income, at least not in the beginning, to have positive effects on conservation attitudes and behaviors. When ecotourism is not participatory, it will probably indeed make people better off economically, but it might not lead to long-term capacity to manage resources sustainably.
For these reasons, attention to process in ecotourism is probably as important as measuring results. When people participate actively in multiple aspects of ecotourism, including planning, marketing, managing, and evaluating (as opposed to merely showing up to earn a wage), they can begin to gain the experiences and skills that will allow them to explore other activities that may improve their lives. In this way, participation in tourism helps people grow accustomed to what they are capable of achieving and what they can determine for themselves. When truly participatory, ecotourism can be empowering rather than merely lucrative in an economic sense. When people are making decisions for themselves, they have the chance to gain from the mistakes as well as the successes—they are learning rather than merely earning.

The second insight is that new attention from tourists and other outsiders can have the effect of calling into question and maybe even reorienting local values. When ecotourism becomes a factor of daily life in any community, it has the effect of holding a mirror to people. The mirror is a metaphor for the collective gaze of tourists, which prompts people to ask some simple, but profound questions about themselves and about their futures, such as: Who are we? What makes us different? What is special about our traditions, beliefs, and our ways of life? What would we like to share with outsiders? What should we keep to ourselves? How do people prefer to see us and why? What are our resources, and why are outsiders so interested in them? How are we using these resources? Are we over-using them? Could we be using them differently? Who should be allowed to use these resources, and to what ends?

These questions that emerge in the context of ecotourism are important to ask when planning for sustainability, either in terms of protecting biological diversity or
cultural diversity. Yet too often these are the questions asked by outsiders, such as development project directors, politicians, and researchers. When local residents begin to ask these questions for themselves, as they often do when they participate actively in tourism, they also begin to plan for themselves. In participatory ecotourism, locals make decisions about how to present themselves to outsiders, how to use their resources, and what to make their communities look like in the future, not only for display to tourists, but also, and more importantly, for the benefit of their own lives. In sum, people are not only made richer from tourism, they are incited to ask and debate questions about their identity, their community, and their resources. These debates lead to processes of self-reflection, self-inquiry, and critical analysis that eventually help people plan a better future for themselves.

In Infierno, tourism has prompted people to discuss and reassess their thoughts on a range of subjects, including the cultural heritage of their community and social relations of the different ethnic groups among them, the merit of various development options for their future, and the relative value of certain wildlife species over others. The addition of new income and jobs from tourism is not the sole or even most important cause of these discussions and changes in people’s thoughts.

The third insight is that we can learn more in our analyses of tourism impacts on communities if we pay attention to heterogeneity of needs and priorities within communities, as well as to different kinds of participation. Not everyone in a host destination will participate equally in tourism. Some people may participate directly, interacting with tourists on a regular basis as guides or performers, while others may become involved only behind the scenes, working as support staff or as wholesalers of
foods and supplies. Locals will also differ in terms of how much time and energy they invest in tourism: some will work as full-time wage laborers; others will contract their labor occasionally, or earn cash only through the sale of goods. Others will choose not to participate at all.

The analysis of tourism in Infierno demonstrates that gender was a key variable that determined who participated in tourism. Also, different kinds of participation had different impacts on a range of variables, from farming and hunting, to attitudes about conservation and development, and notions of ethnic identity. An analysis of overall impacts "on the community" would have missed such nuances between individuals and between households, as well as between differential kinds of impacts.

The Itinerary

"Ecotourism is a kind of tourism that is manageable. It involves taking tourists to see animals and to learn about processes. In ecotourism, tourists have an idea that what they have come to see is more than beautiful, it is necessary for all of us, because we are all connected."

--Community coordinator, Ke’eway Association, 1998

The chapters that follow are written in the form of an ethnography about one ecotourism project in the Native Community of Infierno in the Peruvian Amazon. In telling the story, I will describe the community, the private company, the terms of the joint venture, and the initial results of the partnership. In subsequent chapters, I will move beyond description to an analysis of the impacts of tourism on various aspects of people’s lives in Infierno.

Tourism can be an ideal context for studying politics and economics, social change and development, symbolic interaction, and cultural representation. Because it is
shaped by both social and biological factors, it is an ideal locus for the intersection of both interpretational and positivist approaches to anthropological analysis. Here, I will include two kinds of analysis. One is an economic analysis, based on quantitative data and a hypothesis-testing approach to social inquiry, and the other is more interpretive.

In the quantitative analysis, I will test our theories about the impact of jobs and income from ecotourism on people’s household economic activities, particularly farming and product extraction, and I will examine “participation in tourism” from both sides: What causes it? And what does it cause? With each numerical finding, I will include stories of men and women in Infierno to support and add a human dimension to the analysis.

In the second kind of analysis, I rely on an interpretive approach to explore how tourism in Infierno has shaped new perceptions of what it means to be “native” or “mestizo,” and has prompted people to reexamine how they are living, how they have changed, and how they hope to “rescue” certain remnants of their cultural past.

At various points throughout the thesis, I will turn the lens back and describe the methods, methodologies, and field experiences that informed my work, as well as explanations of how and why these changed over the four years of research.

In the next chapter, I will first set the stage by describing the region of Madre de Dios, its importance for conservation, and how tourism has grown in the area, especially in the past decade. I will also provide some basic information about the history of the Native Community of Infierno, which I will usually shorten to “Infierno,” and the indigenous group, the Ese Eja, for whom the Department of Madre de Dios is native territory.
CHAPTER 2
BIODIVERSITY, ECOTOURISM, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN MADRE DE DIOS

"Biologically, Tambopata is one of the world’s mother lodes." So wrote authors Conniff and Bensonsen in their recent book about invertebrates. "It is possible," they suggested, "in a good half-hour, to see more species in Tambopata than the Italian primitives dared put in their paintings of Eden" (p.127).

In fact, seeing wildlife in most places in the Amazon is not an easy feat, despite the area’s great natural diversity. Most of the fauna is well camouflaged and difficult to pick out through the forest vegetation. For this reason, having a guide, preferably a local one, becomes a necessity. Though in some places, especially where people have hunted extensively, and/or where habitats have been disturbed by humans, even the best guides cannot ensure tourists a good chance of seeing wildlife.

Tambopata is an exception. Even first-time visitors with ill-trained eyes for tropical wildlife are likely to see a great number of species in Tambopata. In fact, a typical stay of four to five days in Tambopata promises the opportunity to see an average of thirty pairs of large macaws (including *Ara macao, Ara ararauna*, and *Ara chloropterus*) a family of giant river otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), at least four species of primates (including *Callicebus moloch, Alouatta seniculus, Cebus apella*, and *Saimiri sciureus*) tayras (*Eira barbara*), brown agoutis (*Dasyprocta variegata*), pacas (*Agouti pacar*), and deer (*Mazama americana*). About one tour group per month is lucky enough to spot a jaguar (*Panthera onca*) and/or a tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), usually during river
trips. In recent years, Harpy eagles (*Harpia harpyja*), the largest raptors in the new world, have also been seen frequently. In fact, an everyday event for tour groups visiting the Native Community of Infierno in 1997 was to climb a 40-meter tower and stare eye-level at a Harpy eagle chick as it was, learning to fly, digesting a sloth, or simply keeping cool under the broad wings of his parent. These opportunities for wildlife viewing have made Tambopata a prime site for ecotourism development in the past decade.

**Biodiversity and Protected Areas in Madre de Dios**

The Tambopata River flows from the Andean slopes of Puno, and through the low foothills and terraces of the Amazon plain before feeding into the Madre de Dios River, ultimately to drain into the Amazon River. Along its trajectory, the Madre de Dios passes some of the most species-rich communities yet reported on earth for birds, butterflies, and dragonflies (Gentry 1990; Foster et al. 1994). Tambopata is the site of Terry Erwin’s famous research that involved fumigating a tree and analyzing the insect species that fell to the forest floor. After a careful count, Erwin topped the previous estimate of a few million insect species to 30-50 million (Erwin 1984).

The watershed of Tambopata is located in the Department of Madre de Dios, an area that spans three million hectares and contains one of the lowest human population densities in the entire Amazon basin. It is only fitting that the Department contains three major protected areas: the Manu Biosphere Reserve, the Bahuaja Sonene National Park (which includes the Pampas del Heath National Sanctuary), and the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone.

For those who know Madre de Dios, it is not surprising that Tambopata would be the location for an innovative and highly participatory approach to community-based
ecotourism. The region has a long history of popular participation in matters that, in other places, have been the domain of government managers. The Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone, in particular, is an exemplary model of local involvement in protected area planning and management (Chicchón 1993, 1994).

In 1990, the Peruvian government first declared the Reserved Zone as a transitory protected area to allow for further planning and management (Bernal et al. 1993; INRENA et al. 1994). One year after the reserved zone had been declared, two locally active conservation organizations joined with the government to organize a forum that brought together local stakeholders, including colonist farmers, indigenous peoples, miners, brazil nut collectors, loggers, ecotourism operators, and others, to discuss their disparate and overlapping interests, and to identify common goals. The landmark meeting began a process of participatory planning that has since led to numerous workshops, informal meetings, radio programs, and other events through which locals have been engaged in making decisions about how land and other resources should be used in Tambopata. A second forum in 1993 rejoined stakeholders to discuss baseline data on the Reserved Zone, and to determine permanent land use categories (Chicchón 1994; Rojas 1993). The result of the second forum was a proposal to establish the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park.

The Bahuaja-Sonene National Park encompasses 537,053 hectares and was created in 1996. From Madre de Dios’ capital city of Puerto Maldonado, the entrance to the park, which lies at the confluence of the Tambopata and Malinowski rivers, is 5-6 hours by boat (with a 55-hp engine). The park joins a protected area of tropical forest in Bolivia known as the Madidi National Park and forms an important conservation

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1 The Reserved Zone extends into the Department of Puno as well as Madre de Dios.
Figure 1 Department of Madre de Dios, Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, and the Native Community of Infierno

corridor. The Native Community of Infierno and its community-based lodge, Posada Amazonas, are situated in the buffer zone of Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, within the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone.
National Economy and Growth of Tourism

Peru’s record growth rates in the world during the administration of President Fujimori has had a significant impact on the expansion of tourism, and particularly of ecotourism (see Table 1). Since coming to office in July 1990, Fujimori has liberalized trade, investment, and foreign exchange regulations (Fernandez 1992). His administration’s economic restructuring program, initially known as “Fujishock,” entailed shrinking the state bureaucracy, opening Peru’s economy to foreign investment, and removing price distortions, such as subsidies, low interest rates, overvalued currency (Strong 1991; Vasquez Villanueva 1993, 1994). The tourism sector in Peru has benefited from several policies specifically aimed at bolstering revenues from tourism. These include privatizing a formerly state-owned airline and one of the largest hotel chain, and creating a new legal framework to stimulate tourism investment, and granting concessions to the private sector for various tourist support services (International Tourism Reports 1996).

Table 1 Fluctuations in Peruvian Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
<th>Policies and Events</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>Implementation of austerity program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
<td>El Niño causes drop in fish catch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>Government ends arrears with IMF and World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>Strong foreign investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>Highest recorded growth rate in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>Strong foreign investment continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>Capital inflows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>El Niño’s impact on agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas Perú
The Peruvian government has promoted tourism as a way to build foreign exchange and investment, and ultimately, to strengthen and diversify the national economy. In a 1998 interview for a national newsmagazine, one government minister described tourism as Peru’s “platform for development in the next millenium” (Caretas 1998). Earnings from tourism have risen steadily since the early 1990s (International Tourism Reports 1996). In 1987, Groom et al. (1991) estimated tourists contributed $6.8 million to the Peruvian economy (p. 399); ten years later, the contribution has more than doubled (PromPeru 1996). In fact, the tourist industry in Peru, including tour agencies, hotels, airlines, restaurants and entertainment, is the fastest-growing sector of the nation’s economy, and is now the third-largest generator of foreign exchange, after copper and fishmeal (ibid.).

Peru’s tourism industry has proven to be very responsive to social and political conditions. Table 2 shows the turns tourism has taken over the years. The rises and falls can be easily matched with major global and national events. Though a cholera epidemic, global recession, and terrorist activities caused Peruvian tourism to crash in 1991, relative social stability since 1993 (linked with counter-terrorism efforts) has allowed Peru to regain the attention of tourists. According to the International Tourism Reports (1996), “it is clearly the improvement of Peru’s image which has been the single most important factor behind the impressive recovery” (p. 44).

Tourism in Madre de Dios has proven even more sensitive to vagaries in the market. Table 2 shows that the slump Peru as a nation experienced in 1992 was even more pronounced in Madre de Dios. This may be a function of the elasticity of demand for certain tourist destinations in Peru. Tourists who want to see the Incan ruins of
Machu Picchu, a United Nations Cultural Heritage site, have only one option about where to go. There is only one Machu Picchu, and *some* tourists will go there regardless of how stable or safe they perceive Peru to be. On the other hand, tourists who wish to visit the rainforest have many options outside of Peru. Politically stable Costa Rica, in particular, has been a popular alternative for many years.

Though Costa Rica has long been a favorite among ecotourists, Peru has begun to gain a greater share of the market. Economically, the contribution of tourism (including ecotourism) to Peru’s total gross domestic product and employment is one of the highest in the world (see Figure 3). Peru’s leadership in this category can be explained by the fact that ecotourism is the fastest growing within the global tourism industry (Sweeting et al. 1999). In fact, ecotourism is growing between 2.5 and 7 times faster than the rest of the tourism sector (Ecotourism Society 1999). The trend within the global tourism industry is toward ecotourism, and Peru the emerging leader in the world for ecotourism destination, even ahead of other well-known ecotourism sites like Belize and Costa Rica (see Figure 3). In sum, ecotourism has become Peru’s competitive advantage in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Tourists to Peru</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Number of Tourists to Madre de Dios</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>445,588</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>5,280</td>
<td>-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>280,156</td>
<td>-37</td>
<td>2,913</td>
<td>-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>384,704</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2,959</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>690,094</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6,305</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>873,843</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7,542</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,022,957</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11,236</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,061,987</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>10,732</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MITINCI
world tourism market. Not only are more tourists coming to Peru because of ecotourism, they’re also staying longer because of ecotourism. A representative from PromPeru, the government’s tourism office, explained, “The average tourist used to stay in Peru for about 5.5 days, and now most tourists stay about 13 days. This extension is due largely to adventure travel and ecotourism.” (cited in Crapper 1998:21).

Peru offers a diversity of ecosystems, the highest recorded biodiversity in the world, and several attractions for cultural and archaeological tourism. Some say that ecotourism’s new clout in Peru contributed to the government’s decision to establish the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park in 1996. The declaration of the park was, indeed, a major coup for conservationists and ecotourism operators alike, especially because Mobil Oil was involved in oil prospecting, and a Trans-Oceanic Highway had been planned for years (Yu et al. 1997:137).

![Projected Growth of Tourism in the Americas 1999-2010](image)

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council

Figure 2 Economic Importance of Tourism in the Americas

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2 The Incan ruins of Machu Picchu, in particular, have been big draws for tourists to South America over many years, and now they are often included in ecotourism package excursions to the rainforest.
The Ecotourism Boom in Madre de Dios

Until as recently as 1993, Tambopata was little more than a hinterland to southeastern Peru’s more famous destinations, Machu Picchu and Manu National Park. For years, only a small enclave of neotropical biologists and conservationists frequented the forests of Tambopata, and the options for tourists were minimal. Visitors could stay in one of three or four lodges along the Tambopata and Madre de Dios rivers, but doing so necessarily entailed making arrangements to join a guided group. Tourism was so minimal in those days that the “baggage claim area” in the Puerto Maldonado airport was equipped with a forklift that deposited travellers’ bags, sometimes carefully, on a small wooden platform. The “airport lounge” was little more than an open-air kiosk several meters from the runway. Small groups of nature enthusiasts visited, and most stayed at one of the two oldest lodges, Explorer’s Inn or Cuzco Amazonico. In 1996, a more attractive and modern airport was built, and several new lodges were either created or expanded.

Today, increasing numbers of international tourists are adding Tambopata to their regular itineraries. In 1987, Groom et al. (1991) estimated that 6,520 tourists visited Puerto Maldonado in 1987; by 1997, the numbers had more than doubled (MITINCI 1998). Now many tourists who are not part of pre-arranged tours are flying to Puerto Maldonado for a brief glimpse of the rain forest. In fact, by 1998, so many independent tourists were arriving to Puerto Maldonado on the one daily commercial flight from Lima

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3 The majority of foreign tourists who arrive to Madre de Dios in tour groups are from the United States. In 1997 and 1998, increasing numbers began arriving from Europe, particularly from Holland, Germany, Italy, and France (MITINCI 1998).
via Cusco that the regional office for the Ministry of Tourism was prompted to issue its first official tourist map for the area.

The Madre de Dios region has become a magnet for national tourists as well as foreign travelers. According to the National Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR), in the 1980s, Lima was the pole for Peruvian nationals. But in the 1990’s, Madre de Dios became the pole, receiving a 97% increase in the number of arrivals. Figure 3 shows arrivals to lodging facilities (“establecimientos de hospedaje”), indicating that people arriving are travelers rather than migrants. In response to the increase in visitors, local entrepreneurs have opened an array of new hotels, restaurants, taxi services, and even internet cafes in the capital city of Puerto Maldonado.4

![Figure 3 National Tourists Arriving to Departments in Peru](source: MITINCI)

4 Notably absent from these efforts to capitalize on the growth of tourism in Tambopata is the sale of traditional handicrafts. In 1997, the most accessible place for buying handicrafts was a small souvenir stand in the airport that offers just a handful of inexpensive and low-quality items imported from other parts of the Amazon. In town, a couple of small shops featured a variety of basketry items, wood carvings, and jewelry crafted from natural seeds and fibers, but, overall, handicrafts were hard to find.
Dusty and filled with motorcycles, Puerto Maldonado is a former trading post from the rubber boom era. Paint-chipped colonial style architecture reveals that the town was once home to a few wealthy families, in addition to the poorer brigade of rubber tappers. Today the official population count for Puerto Maldonado is 35,000, though it feels much smaller than that. “Maldonado,” or “El Pueblo” as it is often called locally, is the kind of place where one can pass the same person three or four times in one day and think nothing of it. It is possible in Maldonado to walk from one end of town to the other in less than 30 minutes. But usually there’s usually no need because whole armadas of rickshaw-like “moto-cars” and motorcycle taxis are waiting to be hailed at any given second. (Fares are usually less than a dollar, no matter where or how far one needs to go, unless it’s to the airport). Restaurant owners and shopkeepers in Maldonado know their clientele by first name, and one particular street dog named “Chico” is affectionately co-owned by practically everyone.

At dusk, one can sit on a bench just meters from the town’s central square and watch pink-orange sunsets over the confluence of the Tambopata and Madre de Dios rivers, and in the evenings, townspeople, visitors, and a growing cohort of conservationists, researchers, and development consultants gather in the square to eat and drink in one of the two or three open-air bars and restaurants. On weekends, people meet at the only discotheque that offers a variety of music beyond the local “chicha.”

Though Puerto Maldonado has its charm, it is rarely the site tourists have much interest in exploring. Rather, most tourists treat the town as a mere transit point, one to be passed through as quickly as possible, on the way to one of the rainforest lodges on the Madre de Dios or Tambopata Rivers.
Since 1990, the number of lodges along the Tambopata and Madre de Dios Rivers has increased from three to nine. Nearly all of these are considered luxury lodges, by adventure travel standards. By “luxury,” I mean that they offer beds, buffet dining, running water, and other amenities. Non-luxury, or backpacker spots offer more rustic accommodations. In general, Tambopata has catered to upscale tourists who pay between US$60 and US$100 per night.

As the number of luxury lodges has increased, so too have the opportunities for backpackers (or mochileros). In the past two years, local families in communities along the Tambopata river have opened at least six new guests houses for these types of tourists, and several more independent guides have begun offering relatively cheap excursions. Also, several rafting outfitters have begun to specialize in trips down the Tambopata River, which includes class 4 and 5 rapids. Even a family of ranchers who owns several hundred hectares near the community of Infierno has indicated they are ready to join the ecotourism boom. In an interview in 1996, they said they had “repented” for clearing so much forest, and that now they wanted to plant trees, and invest in ecotourism.

Tambopata has always been especially popular among birdwatchers. Famously, Tambopata is the site of the world’s largest recorded birdlist: 572 species in an area of 50 square kms. (are 850 bird species have been recorded for all of the United States and Canada combined). Of particular interest to many visitors is the fact that hundreds of parrots and macaws congregate frequently at several local salt licks called “colpas.” The largest colpa in the area, and perhaps in all of South America, is situated just meters from where Rainforest Expeditions (the company who is partner to Infierno) built its first
lodge, the Tambopata Research Center. Many tourists who pass through Infierno’s lodge, Posada Amazonas, are on their way to see this large clay lick. Since 1994, thanks in part to a cover article published in National Geographic magazine (Munn 1994), the colpa near the Tambopata Research Center has been a magnet for ecotourists. If the Tambopata could ever claim the equivalent of an Eiffel Tower for tourism, this would be it.

**Brief History of Madre de Dios**

Tourism is only the most recent industry to bring outsiders to Tambopata. Aside from sporadic contacts during the 17th and 18th centuries, much of Madre de Dios remained uncolonized until the 19th century (Alexiades 1999; Gray 1996). The Andean mountains and the poor navigability of the rivers made the region practically inaccessible. The region was the site of trade of axes and knives from Andean populations, in exchange for feathers, honey, copal, living animals, and in the late 19th century, cinchona bark, a treatment for malaria (Alexiades 1999).

During the rubber boom, the Tambopata River became the major nexus of communication and trade between Madre de Dios and the outside world (Alexiades 1999:94). With the collapse of the rubber boom in the early 1900s, Madre de Dios entered a period of economic and demographic decline. The economic slack during this time was only partly taken up by the emergence of the two other economic extractive activities, Brazil nut collecting and hunting of wild animals for their pelts. World War II brought a brief economic boom to Madre de Dios, fueled by a renewed demand for rubber. The period also marked the beginning of improved aerial and road communications, though it was not until 1965 that a road was built linking Madre de Dios to the rest of Peru (see Belaunde-Terry 1965).
During this time, the Peruvian government began constructing a dirt and gravel access road to Madre de Dios from Cusco, and encouraged migration by offering health care and education facilities as incentives (Collins 1986, 1989). The construction of the road was spurred by a belief popularized by a former president of Peru, Belaunde-Terry, who argued that the conquest of Peru by Peruvians would be complete "when the jungles have been subdued to our benefit . . ." (p. 178). Andrew Gray (1997) reported that, since the 1940s, "the Peruvian state regularly saw the Amazon as an outlet for migration from the highlands. The hope was that the rainforest would generate development and incorporate the area into the country as a whole" (p. 76).

The road opened the area to colonization by farmers from the highlands, loggers, and gold miners (Chirif 1980; Moore 1984, 1985; Renard–Casevitz 1980). Later, throughout the 1980s, Peru’s Agrarian Bank, under the populist regime of Alan Garcia, subsidized primarily rice and beef production in Madre de Dios to help meet national demand (Aramburu 1992). Policies in that era were founded on the belief that Amazonian soils were highly fertile and appropriate for large-scale agricultural production (FADEMAD 1992).

Like the perceived need for new roads to penetrate the Amazon, the belief in the fertility of Amazonian soils was also a by-product of former president Belaunde-Terry impassioned 1960s propaganda. In his book, Peru’s Own Conquest, he wrote, "The eastern slopes of the Andes present a wide variety of locations at differing altitudes and offer the best potential for the development of agriculture and stock raising. An ideal habitat may be sought and found, where land can be obtained far cheaper than on the coast and with a climate much more favorable than in the highland altitudes" (p. 156).
Ultimately, colonization and agricultural expansion subsidized by the Peruvian government and international development agencies led to significant loss of forest cover and the depletion of soils in Tambopata (Painter 1983).

In the last few decades the trade in Brazil nuts has been important to local livelihoods, usually in conjunction with slash and burn agriculture, small-scale livestock production, logging, and mining. Oil exploration also began in the 1970s, resulting in concessions for two corporations, Shell in the 1980s, and Mobil in the 1990s. Most recently, ecotourism has become a lucrative.

**The Ese Eja in Tambopata**

Though Tambopata is home to many migrant and ribereño populations from throughout other parts of Peru and the Amazon, it is the ancestral homeland to only a few indigenous groups who remain. Among these are the Ese Eja, who live in Infierno, and have recently become actively involved in the ecotourism trade of Tambopata.

The Ese Eja, meaning ‘true people,’ is the self-denominated term for this indigenous group of the Tacana linguistic family. A few key studies are essential to contemporary understanding of the Ese Eja: Peruvian linguist Maria Chavarría (1980, 1993, 1996) has documented extensively the language and oral traditions of the Ese Eja of Infierno; Firestone (1991) compiled missionaries’ accounts of the Ese Eja; Garreth Burr’s (1997) dissertation concerns Ese Eja mythology and shamanism; and Miguel Alexiades (1999) has written a comprehensive ethnography of Ese Eja use of natural resources, particularly medicinal plants. Two forthcoming dissertations about the Ese Eja

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5 Alexiades (1999) has listed seven phonetic transcriptions of the name Ese Eja (p. 5). The one most common to the tourism literature, particularly in brochures produced by Rainforest Expeditions, is “Ese’eja.” I will follow Alexiades’ approach, which, in turn, was to defer to Peruvian linguist, Maria Chavarría, and remove the glottal to write “Ese Eja.”
are from Daniela Peluso (Columbia University), who has researched gender relations and social structure among the Ese Eja, and from Constanza Ocampo-Raeder (Stanford University), who is examining the impact of Ese Eja agricultural practices on biodiversity.

The Ese Eja can be divided into three sub-groups, based on minor linguistic differences and geographical origin. The Ese Eja currently living in the community of Infierno are considered Bawaja Ese Eja, and they are historically identified with the Tambopata River and its tributaries. The other two groups are associated with the Heath River (also in Madre de Dios), and the Madidi River in Bolivia (Alexiades 1999). Some Ese Eja oral traditions identify the headwaters of the Tambopata (or “Bawaja”) River as the place where the mythological ancestors descended from the sky along a cotton rope (Chavarría y García 1994). Examination of ethnohistorical records by Alexiades (1999) indicate that the Ese Eja were living on the Tambopata river since the 16th century.  

Prior to contact with outsiders that began sometime in the 16th century, the Ese Eja led a mobile hunter-gatherer lifestyle. The rubber-tapping trade initiated a period of cultural exchange between the Ese Eja and peoples from other regions in the Amazon, as well as with migrants from Bolivia, Brazil, and as far away as Japan. Rubber tapping was also the first major step towards market integration, sedentization, and contact with outsiders. Particularly along the Tambopata River, where the tappers established two centers of trade, “the Ese Eja maintained extensive trade relations, supplying labor, fuelwood, meat and agricultural products to the steamboats” (Alexiades 1999:97).

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6 For an excellent summary of Ese Eja history, refer to Miguel Alexiades’ doctoral dissertation, “Ethnobotany of the Ese Eja: Plants, Health, and Change in an Amazonian Society.” Alexiades has compiled a thoughtful account of Ese Eja contact with outsiders prior to and throughout the 20th century, relying extensively on historical archives and on oral histories from interviews.
In the twentieth century, after changes wrought by the rubber boom, the Ese Eja began to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. Largely through missions, Ese Eja were incorporated into the nation-state, both in terms of spiritual beliefs and language, as well as in socio-political organization. With sedentization came increased exposure to epidemics. Extrapolating from ethnohistorical archives, Alexiades (1999) has estimated that the population of Bawaja Ese Eja was more than 1,000, including those who were living on tributaries of the Tambopata, just prior to the rubber boom. Today, the number has decreased significantly to fewer than two hundred.

**The Native Community of Infierno**

Despite its native name, Infierno is not comprised solely of native, or more specifically, Ese Eja, people. Historically, the land that is known today as the Native Community of Infierno was just a piece of an extensive homeland of the Bawaja Ese Eja. In the late 1960s, the Peruvian military government of Velasco passed a law that granted land rights to indigenous peoples (Gray 1996). From then, indigenous peoples began to claim legally titled indigenous territories known as “native communities.” In 1976, the families living in Infierno received legal title to 9,558 hectares, situated on both sides of

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7 Though I have heard mixed accounts, Infierno (or Hell) takes its rather disreputable name from the time of the rubber boom. As this particular story goes, rubber traders on their way upriver from Puerto Maldonado to the overland pass in the Andes (Astillero) usually reached the area that is now Infierno by mid-day, precisely when the sun was highest, the heat most oppressive, and the men most exhausted from rowing. Over time, the rubber traders began to associate the particular passage in the river with the excessive heat and physical strain, and, eventually, the series of bends in the river earned the name “Infierno.”

8 Land titling came with the help of a local nongovernmental organization in Puerto Maldonado called Centro Eori, which promoted indigenous rights in Madre de Dios for many years before the National Park was declared, and before ecotourism became a significant factor for social change. Today, Peru has more than thirty native communities; only about half of them have been granted legal title (Alexiades and Didier 1996:344).
the Tambopata river, about 40km from Puerto Maldonado and legal status as “native community” (CNI, Libro de Actas, 1976).

Until the 1970s, no indigenous communities were recognized in Peru. Individual parcels within native territories were granted by the national government to “anyone who cared to colonize the area” (Gray 1997:77). This changed in 1974 when the Law of Native Communities stated that Amazonian indigenous peoples were to have all their lands demarcated and recognized as their inalienable territory (ibid:77).

When the government of Peru titled the community of Infierno in 1976, the Ese Eja joined with ribereños and families of mixed indigenous and Andean descent who were already living in the area since the rubber boom. The ribereños are peoples of indigenous Amazonian descent who were born in Tambopata, Puerto Maldonado, Tahuamanu and other areas in the Amazon, including Bolivia and Brazil (García y Barriga 1994). The Andean population is principally from Cusco, Puno, and Arequipa.

Information about why non-Ese Eja members were incorporated into the native community varies. According to some of the elders in the community, the Ese Eja were coerced by the government representatives who were granting the land title to accept the presence of the migrants. Apparently, members of SINAMOS (Sistema Nacional de Apoyo a la Movilización Social), the entity under Velasco’s regime responsible for organizing rural communities under a socialist ideology, conditioned support from the government—mainly for the construction of a school and legal title—on the acceptance of migrants into the Infierno (see also García y Barriga 1994:44).

García and Barriga (1994) have reported that SINAMOS informed the Ese Eja leaders they needed to gather at least twenty families in order to be considered for official
title as a “community.” “Community” in this case is a legal entity recognized before the state, which has the right to solicit government support for public works facilities (mainly for education and health), as well as legal representation. The Ese Eja who were living in dispersed settlements called Chonta and Hermosa Grande, were represented by only fourteen families. In interviews, they recollected they were afraid they would lose their rights to government support unless they pulled in more families to join them, and thus qualify as a “community.”

Official minutes from meetings in which the future community members began negotiating who would be included in the new community indicate that there were concerns about ethnic differences between the families, and how these would play out in a shared community. According to the notes from one of the earliest meetings, a government representative from SINAMOS acknowledged “two classes” (“dos clases”) of people, and then asked, “why cannot these two forces unite?” Apparently answering his own question, he then added, “the natives also can be absorbed with the mestizos” (CNI, Libro de Actas, February 1995).

In that same meeting, an elder from one of the Ese Eja families announced that he did not want to join the “mestizos” because they “deceive us and look at us badly.” (“nos engañan y nos miran mal”). A younger Ese Eja leader, spoke up, “Why don’t we join with the mestizos so that we can have more power? Today we are all brothers, and we are all equal. The bad treatment and the naming of ‘the Indian’ to humiliate us has finished.”

One of the mestizos responded, “Yes, there is discrimination, but there is no reason to call anyone ‘Indian’ if we are all one race.”

9 “Mestizo” is a catch-all term often used in Infierno to refer to anyone who is not Ese Eja, including Andean immigrants and ribereños.
Minutes from a subsequent meeting three months later, reported that “all is well” in reference to the new settlement, save for “a lack of confidence in working together with the mestizos because some of them have committed abuses” (CNI, Libro de Actas, May 1995)

Finally, a year later, SINAMOS offered to build a new school, and the families agreed to form one community. Yet a persistent and underlying tension remained, as the following comment from the official minutes reveals:

“Between the mestizos and the natives, there are disagreements, and because of these, the community will not be able to develop in the best way. It was agreed that the natives will work on one side [of the river] and the mestizos will work on the other side, where the school is” (CNI, Libro de Actas, June 1976).

Anthropologist Andrew Gray observed that “the Law of Native Communities arbitrarily divides each people into communities, many of which are not contiguous. The consequence of this is that islands of indigenous communities appear throughout the rainforest which do not reflect the territory of any people as a whole” (p. 78). As one anthropologists characterized the creation of Infierno, “They basically drew a rectangle on a map!”

Over the following years, the founding members of Infierno gradually accepted several new families of Andean colonists. These migrants became official members of the community and were granted rights to extract and produce from communal lands. In interviews, about half of the current population identified themselves and their children as Ese Eja (also reported in Chavarria and Garcia 1993). Most of the newer residents live in a portion of the community called Cascajal, which is north of Infierno (that is, the

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10 For a view of the straight-edge boundaries of Infierno, see Figure 5 in Chapter 4.
portion of the community called “Infierno,” within Infierno proper) and thus closer to Puerto Maldonado.

Of the three Ese Eja communities in Madre de Dios, Infierno is the one most integrated with the main market in Puerto Maldonado and with other outside influences. Compared to Sonene or Palma Real, the other two Ese Eja communities in the Department of Madre de Dios, Infierno is, by all accounts, the most modern (see Table 3) A lack of Ese Eja identity and tradition in Infierno is apparent in the most obvious ways, such as the way people speak, dress, and interact with outsiders, as well as in invisible or more subtle ways, such as how people perceive characterize their identity and their spirituality.

Table 3 Three Titled Ese Eja Communities in Madre de Dios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Travel Time from Puerto Maldonado (Upriver in 16hp motor)</th>
<th>Travel Time by road</th>
<th>Size of Territory</th>
<th>Estimated Population</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Main Sources of Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infierno</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>1/2 hr. by motorcycle</td>
<td>9,558 has.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Mostly Spanish, though elders speak Ese Eja.</td>
<td>Agriculture; Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palma Real</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>no access</td>
<td>9,500 has.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Bi-lingual: Spanish and Ese Eja</td>
<td>Brazil nuts; fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonene</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
<td>no access</td>
<td>4,000 has.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Mostly Ese Eja</td>
<td>Brazil nuts; leaf thatch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source for Palma Real and Sonene: Alexiades (1999)
The differences between Infierno and other Ese Eja communities are linked to many factors that have accumulated over time, such as differential relations with religious missions, the state, and private traders. In the latter half of this century, two factors have been especially influential in changing the cultural landscape of Infierno. For one, Infierno is located very near to the main urban center of Puerto Maldonado, and, two, since the mid-1970s, the Ese Eja in Infierno have shared their territory and everyday lives with the ribereños and Andean families.

Because Infierno is a short distance by road or river to the capital city of Puerto Maldonado, everyday life in the community is shaped by a range of contrasting and often clashing influences. Families there are neither totally dependent on the market, nor entirely self-reliant as subsistence producers; though they are “Peruvians” who speak Spanish and practice Catholicism, many also describe themselves as indigenous, and they maintain traditional beliefs and practices. They are a community that is in-between in many ways: they are close to Puerto Maldonado and thus they are easily accessible by outsiders; yet they are largely unable to travel anywhere they want, or communicate with the rest of the world on their own terms. 11 They are close to the market, and thus they are constantly exposed to new consumer goods and services; yet, most of them are unable to earn enough income to purchase what they need. They are near an important protected area, the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, and so they are often targeted for new “sustainable development” projects (like ecotourism); yet, most of them are unable to

11 In 1997, the Peruvian government expanded and improved a road that connects Infierno to Puerto Maldonado. This implies that tourism is not the sole or even most important source of change in Infierno. Outsiders arriving from Puerto Maldonado have easy access to Infierno. Every year, it gets easier to drive or take a boat there—the outboard motors get bigger, and the road gets wider. Yet most people in Infierno lack their own form of transportation. Only a few families out of eighty own motorcycles or even bicycles to be able to use the road; and only one family owns a boat with a 16 hp motor.
understand the plethora of bureaucratic and legal rules that are part of the typical project cycle.

Just a brief examination of the situation for education in Infierno captures the dilemma of being in-between the urban market economy and the rural subsistence economy. It is nearly impossible for families in Infierno to educate their children fully while also maintaining a productive livelihood and healthy household. Though Infierno does have a kindergarten and primary school through 6th grade for students, most families live so far from the school that their children must walk dirt trails or paddle along the river for several kilometers everyday just to arrive. When they do arrive, they share poorly-equipped, one-room classrooms with other children of many different ages, grades, and abilities, and are taught through rote memorization from teachers who are hired by the government and usually have little knowledge of the community or the local environment.

If and when children do finish 6th grade, they have two options: stay in the community and thus quit school (because there is no secondary school), or move to Puerto Maldonado where the only secondary schools in the entire region are located, and continue studying. Families of students who choose the second option usually send one parent (most often the mother) to town with the younger siblings, and leave the other parent behind, dividing the family, just to be able to maintain the farm and homestead. The sacrifice for families who choose to relocate and divide themselves is tremendous. Conditions in Puerto Maldonado for poor and newly arrived families are abysmal, with tight quarters in unsanitary and unsafe neighborhoods.
Another important factor that distinguishes Infierno from other Ese Eja communities in Madre de Dios is the fact that it has had previous experience with tourism. In 1977, a company named Peruvian Safaris, owners of Explorer’s Inn, the first ecolodge in Tambopata, proposed collaboration with the community. Initially, Explorer’s Inn served as a base from which European and North American clientele could participate in trophy hunting. When such hunting was banned, the lodge converted to nature tourism and research (Groom et al. 1991:399).\footnote{Several prominent biologists, including Terry Erwin, and the late Al Gentry and Ted Parker, were based in Explorer’s Inn while they carried out seminal research in neotropical ecology.}

The owners of Peruvian Safaris approached Infierno in the early 1980s to request that the community sign an agreement to stop hunting around the oxbow lake, Tres Chimbadas, and in the 5,500-hectare area that had been approved by the government as a reserve for the lodge. Essentially, the company asked the community to respect the territory for tourism purposes, and to refrain from some of their traditional subsistence activities in that zone. In official minutes from the meeting, the company referred to the problem of an Ese Eja hunter who had recently killed several animals in a troop of white-lipped peccaries (CNI, Libro de Actas). At the meeting, the community members agreed to restrict hunting in the area, and also to assist Peruvian Safaris by clearing a trail from the banks of the Tambopata River to the oxbow lake so that tourists could gain easier access. In return, the company agreed to support the community with medicine, a 16-hp motor, a chain saw, and regular payments from entrance fees to the Lake.

Over the years since Infierno’s agreement with Peruvian Safaris, the relations between the two have vacillated. Partly because of financial troubles, and partly out of neglect, the company did not fulfill its obligation of paying the community a standard fee
for each tourist who visited the lake. In later years, a territorial dispute between the community and the company ensued (see García and Barriga 1994; Yu et al. 1997). Though some people from Infierno have collaborated well with Peruvian Safaris, on the whole, the relationship between the company and the community did not fare well for either.

As tourism in Madre de Dios began grow in the 1990s, Infierno was gaining little from the new prosperity. Though some individuals were engaged in tourism, their participation was sporadic and limited to contractual wage labor. The hierarchy of power in local tourism had not been changed. No one from Infierno, or from any other local communities, was participating in tourism as owners and decision-makers.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I will describe the methodology for the study and provide general ethnographic background about the first year of joint venture between Rainforest Expeditions and Infierno. In Chapter 5, I will test the promise of ecotourism, assessing how different levels and kinds of participation in Posada Amazonas have been correlated with changes in people’s household economic activities, and in their values about wildlife. In particular, I will examine how new wage labor and income from tourism has had differential impacts on farming and hunting. In Chapter 6, I will explore the changes tourism in Infierno has wrought on people’s sense of identity, and on ethnic relations between the mestizos and the Ese Eja.
CHAPTER 3
THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE ETHNOGRAPHER

Over the four years of research, I could have analyzed the impacts of ecotourism in Infierno from many different angles, relying on a countless variety of indicators to measure key concepts, and coming up with even more ways to interpret the information. This study represents just one outcome of all those decisions, and in this chapter, I will explain the choices I made. Here I will describe the overall research design during the four years of the study, summarizing how my thinking changed as the data accumulated, as I learned more and developed new insights, and as my relationships with people in the community shifted and evolved. Because I divided the field work over four years, it seemed incongruent to dedicate just one chapter to methodology. Instead, I have chosen to reinsert myself as author and ethnographer throughout the thesis, at various points specifying what I was doing and thinking as the story itself unfolds.

In my descriptions of process, I focus on three main aspects of my role as ethnographer: methodology, methods, and field work. By “methodology” I mean the philosophical origins and consequences of the different methods I chose each year to carry out the research. By “methods,” I mean the tools I used to measure or understand what was happening with tourism in Infierno. And by “field work,” I am referring to the professional and often personal experiences that affected me during the research, and that surely biased my interpretations of what was happening.
I make these distinctions because the methods I selected are more than just the sum total of the various tools I used to collect data, or to situate myself for participant observation in the community. My methodology reveals not only what I did, but how I came to know what I know—my epistemology—on a range of themes covered in the dissertation, including development, conservation, ethnicity, and social change. My methodology also reveals my philosophies about several themes not explicitly addressed in the dissertation, but which do have implications for what I interpret and conclude. This includes my perspectives on culture, nature, science, and social inquiry, as well as how I present and represent myself as an anthropologist, as a young woman, and as a white gringa working in an indigenous community of the Peruvian Amazon.

In this chapter, I will include information about myself and my experiences in the field in order to help reveal the personal biases that are inevitably embedded in my findings. In many ways, the dissertation reflects how the tourism project affected me as much as how it affected the community. Though the study is most importantly about the community, my interpretations of the community have been filtered through my experiences over the four years of research. The ways in which I changed affected not only how I approached and interpreted the community, the things I did, and what I was seeing and hearing, but also how I was received and perceived by the people around me, the kind of information I was privy to, and how it was slanted in the delivery.

The Research Design

My goal over four years has been to explore widely held assumptions about what ecotourism can do for conservation and local communities. I have used a case study format that relies on quantitative and qualitative data, along with journal notes from participant observation over the years. My specific aim has been to explain the impacts
of ecotourism on people's household economic activities, particularly farming and foraging, and on their values, especially with regard to ethnic identity.¹

I began the research in the same month the Native Community of Infierno signed the 20-year contract with Rainforest Expeditions to launch their ecotourism joint venture. Because of the fortunate timing, I was able to collect and analyze my data as part of a natural experiment. Rather than complete all of the field work in one extended visit to the study site, I collected data four times over a period of 13 months over four years. In the first field season, when the lodge was little more than an idea, I conducted a stakeholder analysis; in the second field season, as the lodge was being built, I collected baseline data on people's household economies, and on their values about ethnic identity; in the third field season, when the first group of tourists arrived, I returned to ask the same questions I had asked in previous years, in addition to some new questions; in the fourth year, when the lodge was fully functional, and people were beginning to focus on other concerns in the community, I returned to work in an applied capacity, leading focus groups and workshops to envision needs and priorities for the future, assess current resources, and map out first steps to capitalize on the early success of ecotourism.²

¹ I will focus on identity in the specific context of tourism, and I will provide little in the way of general ethnographic description of the Ese Eja, or of the other ethnic groups in Infierno, namely Andean and ribereño peoples. Traditional Ese Eja society and its demographic and cultural transformations over the past century has been comprehensively and insightfully described elsewhere by Alexiades (1999), Burr (1997) and Chavarria (1980, 1993, 1996). Look also for doctoral dissertations on the Ese Eja from Peluso (Columbia University, forthcoming) and Ocampa-Raeder (Stanford University, forthcoming).

² In March 1999, I collaborated with two Kellogg Fellows to lead a workshop in the community called, "Taller para la Planificación de Desarrollo Comunal" (Workshop for Community Development Planning). During the workshop, participants identified five priorities for development in their community: easier access to better education, higher income from agriculture, improved community organization, handicraft development, and what they called "cultural rescue" (see Chapter 6). Subsequently, I collaborated with separate committees around each theme to produce an integrated proposal for funding of future community projects.
As a result of this approach, I was able to learn what was happening in the community as the project itself was evolving. Stepping away from the field in the midst of the research allowed me to gain perspective and to discern patterns among events and ideas that often seemed unconnected, irrelevant, or merely confusing up-close. Also, dividing the field work over four visits gave me the opportunity to reassess and modify my original objectives and methods as I learned more, and as my thinking changed. Finally, from a statistical perspective, I was able to collect different observations from the same individuals, which then enabled me to build a panel data set. With panel data, I was able to make stronger statistical estimates than I could have made from a single cross-sectional survey.

By returning over several years, I was also able to track changes in people’s lives, and perhaps most importantly, to witness firsthand some of the changes people were experiencing and sharing with me in interviews. This come-again, leave-again approach was especially valuable for developing trust over the years. I left each year with a promise to return with results from the previous year, and when I did, people’s reactions to me shifted, and their responses became more candid. As a result, the field experiences became richer every year and more personal. Whereas in the first years, I was writing about 80 families I had just met, by the fourth year, I was writing about people who were now part of my own life, and whose experiences and perspectives added up to something much more meaningful than the term “data” might imply.

Interviewing the same set of people several years in a row also helped bring into relief the problem of informant accuracy (see Bernard et al. 1984). In some cases, I found that people offered radically different responses to the same questions from one year to
the next. These differences popped up even in questions where I expected the answers to remain relatively fixed, such as, How often do you hunt? How many sacks of oranges do you sell each month? or How much do you spend per week on food? Asking the same questions to the same people over time probably proved annoying for those who participated in the study, yet it was an excellent strategy for learning about major shifts in people’s lives, while also checking for the validity of my questions. I was most interested in the shifts that occurred in households where people had begun to participate in tourism.

There were also disadvantages to spreading the field work out over several years. For one, I lost the ability to observe seasonal variations. I returned every year to Infierno, precisely during the peak of the annual tourism season (May-September). During the dry season when I was there, between June and October, people were also busy with their farms, clearing and burning forest vegetation in time for the first onset of rain. But, I missed what was happening from January to April, the rainy season in which the rice harvest and brazil nut collecting occurs. Overall, my data is biased toward a period when people were most involved in tourism.

The Ethnographer

I have returned to the field every year between 1993 and 1999, spending a total of 26 months in Tambopata. Before first visiting in 1993, I had learned about the region through three years of work in the Latin American Division of Conservation International (CI) in Washington, D.C. By coincidence, my first year at CI, 1990, was the same year the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone was created. This meant that my own learning about conservation and development in the Amazon followed the trajectory of events that
led to the participatory demarcation of the reserved zone, and, ultimately, to the declaration of the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park.

In 1993, I had the opportunity to learn more about Tambopata through direct research experience. For my master’s thesis, "Conservation and Development at the Grassroots: The Challenges for a Federation of Colonist Farmers in the Peruvian Amazon," I carried out eight months of field work in several communities along the Tambopata River and on the road connecting Puerto Maldonado to the highland city of Cusco (Stronza 1996). In that study, I analyzed the evolution and achievements of a grassroots organization, FADEMAD (Federación Agraria del Departamento de Madre de Dios), which had become an active player in protecting natural resources in Tambopata. My interest was in understanding why farmers living in communities near the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone had chosen to participate (or not) in conservation activities organized by the Federation.

Throughout the months leading up to and after the master’s research in Tambopata, I had become a close friend to the people of Rainforest Expeditions. (Today, my husband is a guide who was working with the company before and during the research). By the time I began the doctoral research in Infierno, I was so inextricably linked to the company by everyone who knew me that when I stated my intentions to study the joint ecotourism venture with Infierno, some of my colleagues raised their eyebrows. During the first field season, I was questioned on numerous occasions about my role and objectives: Was I a spy for Rainforest Expeditions? Would my research unabashedly favor the company? If so, what were my ethics? Had I sold out? Would I support tourism in a native community simply because my friends ran the company?
Particularly in that first year, my abilities to remain relatively impartial and objective as a scholar were seriously challenged.³

Over the years since then, and especially as I wrote the dissertation, I reflected on the challenges with an odd sense of gratitude. I have been grateful in knowing that the doubts people openly shared with me ultimately compelled me to make the research methods and analyses as critically balanced and transparent as I could. Had I not confronted reservation over my role in the community, and, in particular, my relationship with Rainforest Expeditions, I might not have been as concerned about accountability and rigor. The fact that I did I anticipate my work would be scrutinized with skepticism kept me especially sensitive to my own biases.

Aside from arousing suspicions that kept me on my toes, my close relationship with Rainforest Expeditions also presented several practical advantages. In particular, my role as an insider made me privy to the company’s financial records and archives, as well as to many candid conversations in staff meetings. Had I been more of an outsider, especially one opposed to the project, perhaps these privileges would have been curtailed. I imagine in such a case the research might have been biased toward the hearsay, rumor, and marketing propaganda that surrounded the project. Instead, the dissertation is built on all aspects of the project, not only the published materials produced for the public (or the gossip), but also the private discussions about the dilemmas and problems the project was facing from the beginning.

³ In The Anthropology of Tourism, Dennison Nash has found that many anthropologists refuse consulting possibilities with tourism companies because they fear “by getting into the tourism business one opens up the possibility of being ‘bought’ by one’s employer and, hence, the establishment” (Nash 1996).
Also because of my role as insider, I was able to gain access to the lodge and its clientele on a daily basis. I observed the project not only from the perspective of a visitor, but also from the viewpoint of the owners, administrators, accountants, personnel managers, guides, cooks, waiters, housekeepers, and boat drivers. I accompanied people in their homes and farms in the community, and then I joined them in the lodge, watching and talking with them as they interacted with tourists and went about their work. In other moments, I accompanied the tourists on their activities and in the lodge, sharing meals with them as we exchanged opinions about the project and the possibilities for improvement.

**What I Was Doing**

Over the years, I lived in three different places within Infierno. In the first year, the community council agreed to let me stay in a small hut near the central commons— that is, near the soccer field and school yard. The thatched structure that became my home had been built as a kitchen for the 3-person staff of the medical post, and so that year I shared my meals with the nurse-practitioners (I bought the supplies, and they cooked). In the second year, I lived in a tent on the cement floor of the storage room beside the communal meeting house, sharing my meals with different families throughout the weeks. In the final year, during the seven month field season, I lived in “my own” thatched home with a nice view to the Tambopata river. In truth, the house belonged to my *compadres* in Infierno who offered to let me stay in it while they were tending their farm on the other side of the river. I usually shared just one meal in the evenings with the family. Though I was near the school and community commons most of the time, for
several weeks each year, I lived and shared meals with families “en la banda” (or the other side of the river).

My days consisted of walking along the foot-trails in the community, pausing to talk with as many people as I had time for on the way to the one or two official interviews I planned for each day. My interviews took place in people’s homes in the early mornings, midday over lunch, or at dusk. Occasionally, people preferred to talk with me in the communal meeting house, with a soft drink or beer at “El Volcán” (the community’s only bodega), or, just twice, in my hut. I did not pay people in cash for their time in interviews with me, but I did offer various forms of in-kind compensation. Usually, I gave toys, coloring books and crayons, clothes, and/or household items.

I have 13 months of fieldwork in Infierno, and a total of 112 household interviews (40 of them from the same household interviewed twice). This is a relatively small number, and obviously, I did not spend every day, or even every week, in structured interviews. Much of my time in the community consisted of talking to people in open conversations, hanging out to listen and watch, and simply participating in routine activities, like washing clothes, shelling brazil nuts, feeding chickens, caring for children, attending meetings, and preparing and eating meals. I spent more time with some families than with others, and these were evenly divided between Ese Eja and mestizos.

Between the structured interviews and the daily routines, I also carried out several participatory types of research activities. These included working in small groups to map the community on large poster boards, locating collectively people’s households, farms, and forest trails, and talking about different areas of communal resources, including brazil nuts, palm fruits, salt licks, etc. In addition to the participatory mapping, I also
used free listing and pile sorting several times to gain preliminary understandings of people’s ideas on various themes, including gender roles, and annual productive activities, the value of different wildlife species, and social networks. In another activity, I distributed cameras to key informants in the community and asked them to photograph various subjects, including things that make them proud, things they consider to be problems, and things they believe should be kept private from tourists. After processing the photographs, I returned the originals to the photographers, discussed the images with them, and kept the negatives for further analysis. Most of this data I used to help me learn more about the ethnographic context in which I was working, rather than as avenues to answer my specific questions about the impacts of tourism.

In the third year, I also spent about a third of the time in the lodge. There, I talked with both the tourists and the staff, participating in the daily operations and activities, and paying special attention to how community members were interacting with the guests, and how they were coping with their dual responsibilities, both in the lodge and as members of the community. I talked extensively with tourists about their impressions of the lodge, though I did not interview them formally. Rather, I distributed written questionnaires, 180 of which were completed (80 in 1996, and 100 in 1998) asking them about their impressions of what they were seeing, and focusing particular attention on how they perceived the ethnicity of their local hosts, who they thought should be participating in the project, and what they thought about community-based ecotourism in general.

In the first year of the research, when the lodge was little more than an idea, there was some significant confusion about what I was doing. Most people in Infierno knew
anthropologists had a penchant for asking a lot of questions, but usually these inquiries were related to native stories or myths, spiritual beliefs, vocabulary and syntax of the Ese Eja language, traditional uses of forest resources, or other cultural themes. I, on the other hand, was asking questions about tourism, which was disconcerting from the start because it seemed out of character for an anthropologist. Also, because people knew of my personal associations with Rainforest Expeditions, some members of the community expressed concern over my intentions and whether it would be safe to talk candidly with me. Over time, as everyone gained a better idea of my interests, and especially as the level of trust grew, people to talk with me much more expansively and candidly about their interactions with Rainforest Expeditions and their feelings about the project. In the last months of the fieldwork, many community members were so eager to talk, they began scheduling interviews with me, reminding me how it important it was to keep track of certain things.

In many ways, my role as an anthropologist in Infierno was similar to that of a tourist. Though I lived in the community for weeks and months at a time, I was always more of an outsider than an insider. I was forever conscious then that I was very much a part of what I was trying to understand—that is, the changes in Infierno brought on by tourists and other outsiders. Often, I felt I was in a hall of mirrors, watching the interactions between the locals and the visitors, while, at every turn, catching my own reflection. Many times, I would introduce myself to tourists, explaining that I was an anthropologist studying the impacts of tourism. Invariably, someone in the group would laugh, a bit self-consciously, and ask, “So, you’ll be watching me?” Well, yes, I often thought, but I’ll be trying to watch all of us, myself included.
I found that few people admitted to the status of "tourist." Most preferred the idea of being a traveler, or one who is more intent than others to explore the real world behind the fake façade. This private and somehow more authentic area tourists often long to see is what Dean MacCannell, author of The Tourist, has called the "backstage."

I remember a couple of guests in particular who flatly denied the "tourist" label. They were backpackers who passed through Tambopata in 1996, stopping for the night in Infierno’s central commons (the area with the communal meeting house, the school, and the soccer field). The President of Infierno at the time, a young Ese Eja man, was a bit taken aback that the visitors had set up camp in the center of the community without prior notice. He waited for them to awake the next morning, before approaching to question their plans. Politely, he asked how they’d slept ("Were they cold?") and then gently informed them that Infierno was a private community—all tourists should check with the project office in Puerto Maldonado, or, alternatively, consult with the native federation, FENAMAD, for permission to stay. Obviously offended, one of the women crawled out of her tent, finished twisting the lid back on her water bottle, and explained in broken Spanish, "Oh, but we’re not tourists. We were just passing through for the night..."

Ethical Considerations

I have chosen to identify the name and location of the community as well as the name of its partner, Rainforest Expeditions. Though many anthropologists make the wise decision to hide location names in their study sites to protect people’s privacy, I have decided that such an effort would make little sense in this study. So much marketing publicity has already been produced about Posada Amazonas in Infierno that my efforts to keep the project unnamed would be futile. I have made a conscientious effort,
however, to omit the names of all individuals involved in the project, including the owners and administrators of Rainforest Expeditions (though I do use pseudonyms).

I have also avoided using the terms “subjects” and “informants” when referring to the people of Infierno because both connote more authority than I had. Though I cannot deny the real economic, social, and cultural barriers that separated me from the people in Infierno, no one willingly served as my “subject,” and people “informed” me only when they chose to (and some chose not to). I have tried instead to be as specific as I can, without using names, about who spoke (a young Ese Eja man, an mother uninvolved in the project, a leader in the community, a respected elder, a new immigrant from the highlands), at what moment, (at the beginning of the project, when the first tourists arrived), and in what setting (at the lodge, in the community, in Lima).

Stakeholder Analysis

In 1996, I lived in Infierno for four months and began ethnographic research on the history and current situation of the community. I conducted a stakeholder analysis of the tourism project by interviewing members of Infierno and representatives of outside organizations about their hopes, concerns, and conflicting agendas surrounding the cooperative agreement between the community and Rainforest Expeditions. The field work in the first year was exploratory, and my goal was to get to know people in the community, and gain a sense of what people felt about the tourism project.

In that first year, I wore three hats: one was volunteer intern for Conservation International (CI), the second was volunteer consultant to Rainforest Expeditions, and the third was doctoral student. My responsibility with CI was to carry out a stakeholder
The Participatory Community Planning office of CI had agreed to act in an advisory role to the joint venture in Infierno, but before getting more involved, they wanted an understanding of what different social groups within the community were thinking and saying. My job was to walk door-to-door in the community, and to talk with people about tourism.

My role vis-à-vis Rainforest Expeditions was similar. The company wanted to be sure that people in the community knew about the project. When I arrived in May 1996, I learned that the community’s vote to sign the contract had been unanimous, but in fact, many people were ill-informed, or as in the case of most women, completely uninformed. The company also wanted to give people the chance to decide whether and how they would like to participate in the project.

In sum, my role the first year was to carry out exploratory research with the applied task of coordinating a process of participatory planning among the members of the community, Rainforest Expeditions, Conservation International and non-governmental organizations involved in the project as advisors.

As I began the stakeholder analysis, I was especially interested in understanding how the variables that distinguished stakeholders within Infierno, namely ethnicity, gender, age, resource use, and geographical location, correlated with varying opinions about the project and varying levels of involvement with Rainforest Expeditions. In addition to talking with stakeholders in the community, I also wanted to learn the opinions of those who had influence from outside the community. The questions were:

a) what are the concerns and hopes of everyone involved?

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4 My work with the Peru Program at CI was sponsored by the Managing Ecosystems and Resources with Gender Emphasis (MERGE) Program at the University of Florida.
b) what are the alliances and conflicts between those who are involved?

c) how are alliances and conflicts changing as the project develops?

I used a series of participatory tools within the community to understand stakeholder interests and concerns within the community. These included focus groups, mapping, freelists and pile sorts. I used the results of pile-sorting the names of men and women in the community to organize focus groups to talk about the project. Essentially, I was interested in knowing women’s opinions about which women “belonged together” (however they defined that) and men’s opinions about which men “belonged together.” I wanted to be sure the groups I was organizing were men and women who felt comfortable talking among one another. I also wanted to reveal “clusters” of people (people who normally associated with each other) in the community for future sampling purposes. After interpreting the data with ANTHROPAC (Borgatti 1992), I did two things: first, I made two maps of the community showing the geographic locations of households (one map showed the women’s locations, and the other showed the men’s), then I color-coded the clusters of men and women to show how their associations with each other were distributed geographically. This information was critical as I made my daily trips to households for interviews, conversations, and focus groups. The second step was to overlay the clusters onto a genealogy chart of the community. This helped me understand how social networks among men and women were linked to familial ties.

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5 I wrote the names of men and women in the community, and then asked the women to sort the cards with women’s names, and men to sort the cards with men’s names. I had first asked the president of the community for a list of all male and female adults residents (he gave me a list of 98 men and 56 women). Unfortunately, the lists were not exhaustive: one problem I discovered later was that the list of men included both single and married men, whereas the list of women included only married women and a relatively small proportion of the single women.
For the focus groups I gathered four to seven community members at a time to talk about the project, relying on a series of hand-drawn posters to characterize various phases of the tourism project. Each meeting lasted 1-2 hours, and the objective was both to explain the project plans in detail (especially because so many people were ill-informed, even though the contract with Rainforest Expeditions had already been signed), to listen to people’s opinions and expectations. Specific questions were: What do you think about the project? What do you expect you might gain or lose from this project? What are your concerns or fears? Would you like to work in tourism? Why or why not?

Outside the community, I also interviewed representatives from different stakeholder groups, including non-profit conservation and development organizations, grassroots organizations, government ministries for agriculture and tourism, competitor ecotourism companies, and other researchers familiar with Infierno. With these stakeholders, I asked a series of questions about their opinions of ecotourism in general, and their specific concerns and hopes for the joint venture between Rainforest Expeditions and Infierno.

In the first year, I learned several lessons about carrying out a stakeholder analysis. One is that conflict is intrinsic to the process. The goal of stakeholder analysis, literally, is to define differences in what people have “at stake” relative to a particular project or policy (Grimble and Chan 1994). As I gathered this kind of information, I learned not only about the opinions of the people I was interviewing, but also their opinions about what other stakeholders were doing and thinking. In practice, this meant

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6 Many people asked what seemed like the most basic questions, such as “What is a lodge? and “What exactly do you mean by ‘tourism’”?
that I was creating opportunities for people to talk about each other. In the 75-page written report, I was essentially highlighting and making explicit the very things people would have preferred to keep discrete.

When I returned to the field in 1997 and distributed the report to community leaders and other stakeholders, I received some incisive criticisms, some suggesting that my report resembled a gossip column. One anthropologist wrote,

"So much of peoples' reactions are based upon perceptions without clear foundations or information. That is evident in your report, where so much that is said is so clearly gossip. I believe all of the actors have some responsibility for this situation, which could hardly be worse than it is now. However, your report, in my opinion, only exacerbates that situation, because so much of what is reported is simply gossip (from all sides) . . ."

A representative from a nongovernmental organization sent me a letter a couple of months after I had returned from the field. She suggested that I had simply gotten the facts wrong and, in the process, damaged the reputation of her organization. She wrote:

"I did see a short section [of your report], which is grossly inaccurate, and has caused considerable complications for . . . [our organization] in Infierno. [We] will have to make a formal response to Infierno concerning the allegations which were made."

On a more positive note, the fact that people were vocal about their concerns was very useful and relevant to the research. People followed up with me after reading the report with comments like, "I disagree with what you wrote here on p. 56. The way you've portrayed it is not the way things happened. Here is how things really happened . . ." These kinds of comments proved to be extremely valuable as checks to the validity of my findings, and as counterpoints to my interpretations. In fact, the follow-up comments were in many ways more valuable than the initial interviews because they
captured people’s opinions in ways that were more candid. Finally, the advantage of producing a report about preliminary findings before publishing anything that could have reached a larger audience was that I offered people the opportunity to clarify or defend their position.

Process aside, what I learned from the stakeholder analysis was that conflicts outside the community, usually on the part of stakeholder groups who wanted to help, often exacerbated conflicts within the community, rather than provided much guidance. For example, tour companies who were vying for the same ecotourism market had the members of Infierno asking, “Who should we deal with?” Nongovernmental organizations were competing, too, over the role of who should advise the community in their dealings with Rainforest Expeditions. The members of Infierno seemed generally open to working with any group willing to offer support. However, once they became enmeshed in the political relations among stakeholders outside the community, they were resigned to take sides. The result was that outside relations were replayed inside the community.

I also learned from the initial stakeholder analysis that Infierno was home to few “social facts.” As a student, I had been exposed to the idea of history as interpretation, but I had not fully grasped the implications of the concept for writing ethnography. I went to Infierno expecting to get “to the bottom of things,” squarely linking the community’s history with the events, meetings, and debates that had led up to their agreement with Rainforest Expeditions. I expected to find differences of opinions between stakeholders with regard to the project; after all, opinions were opinions, and, of course, they would be subjective. But I also expected to learn about the history of
Infierno as a fairly straightforward series of events and key figures that had flowed, unswervingly, into the present. As I pieced together people's accounts of the history of Infierno, I learned how wrong I was.

In fact, the more time I spent in Infierno, and the more I talked to people, the more I learned, but the less I knew—or really knew—for certain. A friend working on his dissertation admitted to a similar feeling: "Spend a week in a place," he said, "and you can write a book about it. Spend a few months there, and you might be able to squeeze out an article. But live there for a year, and you'll never feel capable of writing anything."

This insight aroused suspicion in me when I heard other researchers, project managers, and politicians, especially those who had spent very little time in the community, speaking for the people of Infierno. With my own experience of how difficult it was to gain consensus on almost any issue in Infierno, I began to filter more carefully the recommendations of people who presented themselves as knowers or experts of Infierno. And as I became more aware of other people's biases, I began to see my own more clearly. Though all of us who are connected to the community—the researchers, project directors, tour operators and tourists, indigenous leaders, and others—have diverging perspectives, the contradictions between us present not a problem so much as an opportunity to piece together what we have observed and perceived, and then ultimately gain a more nuanced view of how things are (or how they were) in Infierno. Here is where the "Rashomon effect," or the fact that the same event can generate significantly different explanations or meanings for people, seems especially relevant.
The inter-subjectivity of cultural interpretation, and the fact that different researchers perceive things differently, need not preclude us from writing about what we do learn and then cross-checking our findings with others. What is especially critical in this process of interpretation through triangulation, as it would be in any science, is a discussion of methodology, or how we came to know what we know. Because the instruments of measurement in anthropology are often our own observations, the threats to validity are inextricably linked to personal biases. Here, then, before I move to the analyses in the next chapters are some of the main biases to consider in my own work:

1) Before I began the research, I was associated personally with Rainforest Expeditions. This meant that people who were opposed to the project might have been wary to share their most critical opinions with me during the first year. In subsequent years, my conversations and interactions with people became increasingly candid.

2) I spoke only Spanish in my interviews, not Ese Eja. This meant that some of my interviews, particularly those with native elders in the Infierno, were limited in the depth of our conversations, and in the nuance of my understanding.

3) I lived in Infierno over several years, but only during the months of May to December. This meant that I saw what was happening during the height of the tourism season, but I missed other important moments in the annual cycle.

4) I interviewed only adults between 18 and 50. Though I spent countless hours with children and elders, I did not include them in more formal interviews. Therefore, my understanding of how they feel about the tourism project is limited.
On a hot afternoon in late April 1998, a canoe-load of tourists escaped the dust and noise of Puerto Maldonado and motored up the Tambopata River of southeastern Peru. Turning each bend, they carefully combed the tree-lined banks for signs of capybara, caiman, or maybe just a bright and sallying flycatcher. The tourists had journeyed to the Department of Madre de Dios, site of the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, and home to more species of plants and animals per square kilometer than has been recorded anywhere else on earth. Peruvians like to boast that this lush land of tropical forest is the biodiversity capital of the world.

After three hours of travel past small farms, groups of children playing in the river, women washing clothes, and a couple of 16hp taxi boats loaded down with papaya, manioc, and plantain, the guests arrived at a large bend in the river, their final stopping point. On one side lay a large beach named Hermosa Grande; on the other, high above, and hidden by a wall of trees was Posada Amazonas, a newly built 24-room ecotourism lodge crafted from thatch and bamboo, and furnished with a few comforts from home. Waiting to greet the visitors were Ese Eja and mestizo members of the Native Community of Infierno and their new business partners, Rainforest Expeditions.

The Joint Venture

Just two years before tourists in that story arrived to Tambopata, in May of 1996, the members of Infierno and the tourism company had signed a legally binding contract
to begin building and co-managing Posada Amazonas. Calling their joint venture the “Ke’eway Association in Participation,” the partners agreed to split profits 60% to the community, and 40% to the company, and to divide the management fifty-fifty. A critical tenet of the agreement was that community members should be actively involved in the enterprise, not only as staff, but also as owners, planners, and administrators; further, they should join Rainforest Expeditions in making decisions about the future of the company as well as providing services for tourists. The partners also agreed that after 20 years, the entire operation—the lodge and everything in it, short-wave radio, furniture, kitchen ware, power generators, etc.—will belong to Infierno, and community members will become sole proprietors and managers.

As long as they remain partners, the members of Infierno are obligated to maintain an exclusive contract with Rainforest Expeditions.¹ No one from the community can strike a deal with a competitor company to build a second lodge, nor can any individual independently create an additional ecotourism project within communal territory. Also, outside visitors must seek permission from the Association before using ecotourism infrastructure in the community, including the lodge itself, trails through the forest, the catamaran in the oxbow lake, and the 40-meter canopy tower (see Appendix B for more information about the lodge infrastructure and typical itinerary).

¹ Though this was the original plan, the terms of the agreement changed in 1999 when the two partners received financial support from a Peru-Canada bilateral agency. As a condition for accepting financial assistance from Peru-Canada, Rainforest Expeditions ceded its portion of the infrastructure to the community. This means that community members now own the lodge (and everything in it), and after 20 years, they will not need to buy out Rainforest Expeditions’ portion. Meanwhile, the joint venture with Rainforest Expeditions remains exclusive, meaning the community cannot drop Rainforest Expeditions as its partner and then sign on with another company to co-manage the lodge (see Appendix A).
The Decision to Collaborate

Accounts of which partner initiated the agreement are mixed. Each side credits the other, but the consensus from outsiders is that Rainforest Expeditions was the first to was signed, and by 1995, these people had begun lobbying for a lodge in their own community. As is the case with so many community projects, a few individuals spoke for the majority. According to minutes of a general assembly meeting in which the owners of Rainforest Expeditions met with the community, three leaders of Infierno—all of them Ese Eja-- spoke in favor of the project (CNI Libro de Actas, October and November 1995).

Each partner had plenty of incentives to cooperate. Rainforest Expeditions (RFE) had been working in the ecotourism business since the early nineties. Their first lodge, five hours upriver from Infierno, is the Tambopata Research Center, which began as a research station for a project to study the reproductive behavior of large macaws and to set up artificial nestboxes. (Holle and Nycander 1996; Munn 1994). As the lodge located nearest to the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, and the only permanent facility situated near a now-famous macaw clay lick, the Tambopata Research Center was already experiencing great success in the ecotourism market when they began negotiating with Infierno.

As a company, Rainforest Expeditions had received good marks from local environmentalists before the agreement with Infierno. They had played an active role in regional planning for the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone, and they were more conscientious than most local companies about hiring Peruvian nationals to fill all staff positions, including guides. In fact, until 1997, Rainforest Expeditions was the only
company in the region to hire Peruvian guides. Other lodges were hiring foreign naturalists on work-study agreements (i.e., foreigners guide tourists in exchange for lodging and board, and the opportunity to carry out research in surrounding forests).

What Rainforest Expeditions sought in approaching the community was the opportunity to create an overnight resting place for their tourists as they made the eight hour journey to the Tambopata Research Center from the airport in Puerto Maldonado. Before investing in Posada Amazonas, the company was housing their guests in competitor lodges, including Explorer’s Inn, and they needed another option somewhere halfway between the airport and the Research Center (see Figure 4). Although they could have selected any one of many communities that fringe the banks of the Tambopata River, they chose Infierno specifically for two reasons: it is the only native titled community in an area dominated by colonist communities, and it is a prime site for wildlife viewing.

The first reason is linked to an expectation of what tourists traveling to the Amazon might want to see. Following on the cue of travel magazines and other popular media, many tourists in fact expect to find idyllic villages where native peoples live in relative seclusion from the modern world (save for the tourist boats), and are open to sharing the serenity of their nature-based lives with visitors. Though the Amazon is a place of great complexity: of urban areas with schools, churches, and offices, of cattle ranchers and farmers, politicians and oil executives, families of mixed Japanese and Amerindian heritage, men and women gathered beneath thatched homes watching the World Cup from their portable televisions, the ecotourism industry rarely has much to say about these facets of the Amazon. Instead, a different image is often projected, one of a
place suspended in time, unfettered by modernity. And within this image lies the indigenous “noble savage,” living harmoniously with his surroundings. A quick scan of the popular travel literature suggests that the link between “indigenous” and “nature” is helping to fuel the ecotourism boom in the Amazon.

Figure 4: Eco-lodges on the Tambopata River: The Native Community of Infierno is situated midpoint between the airport in Puerto Maldonado and Rainforest Expeditions’ privately owned lodge, the Tambopata Research Center.
The Ke’eway Association has avoided blatant attempts to sell these stereotypes of Amazonian culture, but so far the marketing materials aimed at tourists have highlighted the “native, Ese Eja” and sidestepped altogether the fact that Infierno is a mixed ethnic community. For reasons I will discuss further in Chapter 6, indigenous rather than mixed communities seemed to be an easier sell to tourists hungry for authentic and traditional experiences. For these reasons, Infierno was undoubtedly the best choice among potential partners for Rainforest Expeditions.

A second reason Rainforest Expeditions chose Infierno is because the community boasts so much wildlife. Two spectacular and rare species seen often in Infierno are Harpy eagles (*Harpia harpyja*) and Giant river otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*). Together with the jaguar and caiman, the Harpy and Giant otter represent the most important predators at the top of the food chain in Amazonian forests, and they are key attractions for ecotourists. In addition to the Harpy, several other large raptor nests have been found within Infierno, including one Crested eagle nest (*Morphnus guianensis*), two Ornate Hawk Eagle (*Spizaetus ornatus*) nests, and one King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) nest. All of these were located by members of the community.

An added bonus to the raptors as tourist attractions in Infierno is that they have long nesting periods. Harpy Eagles can nest for as long as 18 months (Alvarez 1997). This characteristic makes these large birds especially good for tourism: the longer the nesting period, the greater the number of tourists who will have the possibility of seeing one of them, and maybe even a chick, active in the nest.

It is no accident that Infierno is the site of many large raptor nests. The community does not necessarily have more raptors per square kilometer, but they do have
more knowledge about where to find them. A whole community of scouts in Infierno collect brazil nuts annually, and therefore they frequent areas where large raptors are prone to nest. Because brazil nut trees are dispersed throughout the forest, it is common for people in Infierno to walk around with their heads up, looking for falling nuts, and in so doing, they are more likely to notice nests (Piana, personal communication).

From the perspective of the community, ecotourism represented a possible development alternative. Because Infierno is in the buffer zone of Bahuaja-Sonene National Park, people said they felt limited, both in terms of what they could extract from the forest, and how much they could expand agriculturally. Ecotourism seemed like a good opportunity. One man who was a founding member of the community explained, “We do not have many development options, but we do have flora and fauna. Ecotourism can sustain us for awhile.”

People also described the agreement as a way to gain a foothold in the ecotourism industry. Ecotourism has existed in Tambopata since the 1970s (see Chapter 2), but has really begun to prosper in the 1990s. Now an average of 40-50 tourists arrive to Puerto Maldonado every day, and boatloads of them pass before people’s thatched homes along the Tambopata River morning and afternoon. In fact, the movement of tourists is such a reliable, audible, and visible fact of life in Infierno that people can tell the time of day just by checking which boat is heading up or down river. The opportunity to participate actively in this daily ritual, and to benefit directly from it, is what many community members hoped to gain by signing the contract with Rainforest Expeditions.
Figure 5: The Native Community of Infierno and site of Posada Amazonas

Though they signed the contract, not everyone in Infierno is obligated to participate in tourism. The community comprises about 80 families whose homes are spread over 10,000 hectares of forest straddling the Tambopata River. The lodge itself is located a half-day’s paddle by dug-out canoe from the center of the community, and
because of this distance, tourism does not necessarily represent a direct intrusion on people’s lives (see Figure 5).

**New Attention from Outsiders**

Since its inception, Posada Amazonas has drawn positive attention from scholars, journalists, practitioners, and activists in conservation and development. A vice-president of Conservation International hailed the lodge as a potential model both for collaborating with local people in protected areas and for making ecotourism truly participatory. In April 2000, CI’s Ecotravel Center awarded Posada Amazonas the prize for “Excellence in Ecotourism.” The Ecotourism Society has highlighted the project as an example of how joint ventures between community ecotourism projects and pre-existing ecotourism business ventures can be a successful approach to ensure the success of community ecotourism projects (Epler Wood 1998). In 1999, the Inter-American Development Bank invited the Rainforest Expeditions to present its experiences in the Ke-eway Association with Infierno to an ecotourism development policy forum attended by several of the largest U.S. environmental organizations in Washington, D.C.

The Ke’eway Association has also been featured in articles appearing in popular international magazines, as well as on the front-page of Peru’s most widely-ready newspaper, *El Comercio*. The British Broadcasting Company (BBC), and other major film crews have filmed in the community, and, in 1998, a three-hour documentary entitled, “Candamo: The Last Uninhabited Forest,” produced by an independent filmmaker, featured footage of Infierno and the three main protagonists were from the community. The show was aired on primetime national television in Peru and
subsequently released to nearly a hundred broadcasters abroad, including the Discovery Channel in the United States.

The project has gained so much attention from the media that one of the owners mused, “When we began negotiating with the community, they laughed; when we started building the lodge, they criticized; now that we are operating, they say nothing. But the journalists do . . .” Indeed, over the course of the research, I encountered seven anthropologists, five biologists, four filmmakers, including the BBC and the Discovery Channel, four volunteers, and six nongovernmental organizations. This is all in one community with 80 households. In one day alone, three film crews were roaming about Infierno.

One experience in particular really brought home for me the public distinction Infierno had achieved on so many levels. In 1999, the community welcomed representatives from an Aguaruna indigenous community of northern Peru. The visitors were part of a grassroots organization that was dedicated to community development, and they had traveled a great distance to Infierno to learn more about ecotourism. During the first meeting, in which the Aguaruna presented their own experiences in raising wildlife in captivity, I noticed that two of the guests kept glancing over at Miguel. I wondered for a moment if Miguel had said or done something to offend them. When the meeting was over, I walked over to the two men to see if I could ask some questions. We talked amiably for about fifteen minutes, and then they became silent. I assumed they were tired of talking with me, and as I was about to thank them for their time, one leaned over, and in the shy manner that overcomes people in the presence of fame, asked me if Miguel was the actor who had appeared in the film “Candamo.” I laughed, relieved that that was
their only concern, and said, “No, that’s Francisco, but they do look a lot alike.” Then, amazingly, they asked if I thought it would be OK (“esta bien?”) to meet—simply meet—Miguel! I realized then that the members of Infierno had moved so much into the national spotlight that they could legitimately claim celebrity status.

Aside from new popularity, Infierno’s tourism project has also received substantial financial support from a Peru-Canada bilateral agreement and the MacArthur Foundation, both of which helped finance construction of the lodge and subsequently supported community training (see Appendix A). In 1999, the World Bank gave a substantial grant to finance the development of a handicrafts project. Other potential sources of funding have expressed keen interest in supporting ecotourism-based development in Infierno. The project generally offers so much promise (as do several other community-based ecotourism projects in Latin America) that international support has been relatively abundant and forthcoming.

**Opposition to the Project**

Posada Amazonas has not received the applause of everyone. In fact, for some critics, the lodge represents yet another chapter in a long history of capitalist exploitation of and among native peoples. For these skeptics, a private company like Rainforest Expeditions seems the worst potential partner for Infierno, even with the promise of full and equal participation. Anthropologists and indigenous rights activists, in particular, were loathe to embrace any kind of capitalist investment in Infierno. This is with good reason, for throughout other places in the Amazon, and over many decades, private capitalists have benefited the most from the Amazon, either through rubber, timber, quinine, animal pelts, gold, cattle, oil, or some other resource. Local peoples, meanwhile, have faced decimation from disease, forced enslavement, a dwindling resource base, and
marginalization from homelands. In Madre de Dios alone, extractivist industries in cinchona bark, rubber, animal pelts, gold, and timber had already devastated the Ese Eja indigenous population long before Rainforest Expeditions came onto the scene (Alexiades 1999). History had provided enough testimony against the win-win prospect of coupling of private companies with local communities.

Within the realm of capitalism, tourism has been especially insidious. Anthropologists, in particular, rarely have anything nice to say about the impacts of tourism on local communities (this is in stark contrast with what many have to say about ecotourism). This is with good reason, for tourism has been linked to commoditized and contrived displays of culture (Urry 1989, Núñez 1989; Greenwood 1989), uneven development (Erisman 1989), social conflict (Mansperger 1989), disruption of local livelihoods (Seiler-Baldinger 1988), and the degradation of scarce resources (Giannecchi 1992).

Overall, wariness against the investment of private companies in local communities seemed wise in the face of overwhelming evidence, but it also presented a dilemma: if ecotourism could indeed be a viable option for relatively low-impact development in Infierno, how could the community create their own ecotourism project without help in gaining links to external markets? Case studies from the Ecotourism Society have shown that most community tourism ventures do not meet people’s economic expectations simply because they lack marketing, and not enough tourists visit to offer enough economic returns on local investments (see Bennett 1999; Rodriguez 1999; Schalken 1999). Typically, the community makes money in the beginning from curiosity seekers, and then the flow stops, as does everyone’s initiative.
Non-profit organizations (NGOs) and government agencies come to mind when thinking of appropriate partners for community-based ecotourism. Though NGOs may have the right focus on long term community welfare, private companies are typically more efficient and savvier in a market sense. In a 1998 publication, Megan Epler-Wood, president of the Ecotourism Society, summarized this point, “Joint ventures between community ecotourism projects and pre-existing ecotourism business ventures have been repeatedly underlined as the most successful approach to insure the success of community ecotourism projects” (p. 25). This is because the businesses bring the marketing savvy to the partnerships, and the communities provide the local expertise. As one tourist visiting Posada Amazonas remarked, “Generally someone from the outside with education and experience is needed to make a project like this successful. Adding a profit incentive can help.”

It was precisely Rainforest Expeditions’ quest for profit that sparked so much opposition. A representative from a local conservation NGO argued, “There are inherent contradictions between the principles of Ese Eja culture and Rainforest Expeditions. The Ese Eja have an ethos of sharing, not of ripping off.” Though incendiary, this comment captured well the sentiment of many scholars and activists who maintain that traditional societies are irrevocably changed when they become newly (or more intensively) integrated with the market economy.

Critics also forecasted negative impacts on the economy of Infierno. Many argued that ecotourism would compel people to give up their traditional livelihoods in farming and extraction, and to become increasingly dependent on wage labor. Though they would begin to earn wages, they would also forfeit their subsistence base and thus
expose themselves to economic shock when the tourism industry hit a bust. One person commented, “Wage labor is a step down from where they are.”

Further opposition to the Ke’eway Association arose from fear that ecotourism would erode cultural identity and overpower traditional institutions in Infierno. One anthropologist questioned, “Why change the Ese Eja to be capitalists? It will change their identity. It’s horrible to destroy a culture.” This particular comment captured a common assumption that tourism would cause people in Infierno to become more like their Lima-based partners. Critics predicted “acculturation” or loss of identity in Infierno because they believed that the exchange of information, ideas, and practices between the two partners would flow in a single direction, from the company to the community, and not the other way around.

A widespread assumption among critics was that people in Infierno had blindly accepted, and not chosen, the agreement with Infierno. The critiques, though emanating from concern for the community, served to stir up doubts in people’s sense of their own capacities. Compounding these doubts was the belief that, in fact, they were not capable. Yu et al. (1997), for example, wrote, “The necessities of the tourist trade (language abilities, specialized vocational skills, and structured work routines) make it difficult for even the best-intentioned tourist lodges to provide much direct employment to local peoples in the Madre de Dios region” (p. 135).

The Tambopata river port became a cauldron for rumors in the first year. The port is the entry point for goods brought in from Infierno to sell, and it is the exit point for the boatloads of tourists who arrive daily to visit one of the lodges on the Tambopata River. People who lived and worked in the Tambopata River port in 1996 relied on
gossip and rumor to influence local perceptions about the project, even among members of the community. Several owners of the dry goods stores and kiosks in the port said they heard stories every day about how Rainforest Expeditions was taking advantage of the community, and that the people of Infierno had been easily fooled by the company.

As outsiders who were concerned about the project engaged in discussions with Rainforest Expeditions, the members of Infierno did not remain silent. Many tried to defend their decision, and to claim their own agency in making the deal with the company. One of the younger men who was actively involved in the project said, “We are owners of the community, and we have a right to decide for ourselves. Other people like to take control... I think that is because we are not united and well organized among ourselves.” A vocal few wanted to let outsiders know they had not been coerced or duped into signing the agreement. One man explained, “We agreed to build the lodge to ensure a future for our children.” Another commented with some frustration, "How are we going to progress if they tell us we can’t do it? We’re natives, but we can think like other people." Opposition to the project also engendered cynicism, as one man observed, “Now that we have formed our own company, they get involved, and put obstacles before us. But before this, they didn’t pay much attention at all.”

Even people in favor of the project were worried that Rainforest Expeditions was moving too fast. Long before the first floorboard of Posada Amazonas had been laid, tourists began visiting a Harpy eagle nest in the community, and the Rainforest Expeditions’ marketing team in Lima began reaching out to tour operators in Europe and the United States. The message from nongovernmental organizations was to slow down, give the community more time. At a local restaurant in Puerto Maldonado, on a poster
that read, “Put the brakes on rainforest destruction!” someone scratched out “destruction” and wrote “Expeditions.”

Within the community, some people were anxious to move faster. They had been dedicating their time, labor, and hope to getting the tourism project up and operating. Why was it taking so long, and how much longer before they would begin to see some returns on their investment? Meanwhile the company was under extreme pressure, as tourists were already booked to arrive in the coming months, and the lodge was not yet built.

**Getting Started**

It is true that in the first year, the community was ill-prepared for Posada Amazonas. In interviews just two months after the agreement, fully half the community, namely the women, knew very little about the fact that their husbands, sons, and brothers had signed a contract with Rainforest Expeditions. Many people, both men and women, were confused about the exact terms of the agreement and how it might affect their lives. Fortunately, outside support was forthcoming. Representatives from several organizations in the region as well as legal consultants affiliated with the local indigenous federation, FENAMAD (*Federación Nativa de Madre de Dios*), stepped in to help community members interpret the details and legal implications of the contract. They raised specific concerns over the exclusivity of Rainforest Expeditions in the community (CNI Libro de Actas, November 1995).

Within the community, people who were involved with Rainforest Expeditions from the beginning acted as promoters, keeping others informed and involved. In one activity, project leaders walked from home to home in Infierno, carrying large, laminated posters with photographs and drawings to explain plans for the lodge and the different
ways in which people could participate. Also within the community, a ten-person ecotourism committee called the *Comité de Control* was elected to collaborate with the company in making decisions for the project, and to report to the council of leaders and other members of the community during general assembly meetings.

A key task for the *Comité de Control* in the beginning was to encourage involvement in the construction of Posada Amazonas. The *Comité* organized communal work parties of people who volunteered their labor for a week at a time in rotation. The ensuing months of work were intensive. Community members cleared 1.5 hectares of forest, and then began weaving and laying 18,000 panels of palm thatch, hauling 400-pound posts from the river, nailing at least 8,000 floorboards, cutting several kilometers of trails through primary forest, and engaging in countless other strenuous tasks.

Though the agreement had been signed by a majority vote, many community members were hesitant to get involved. “We do not have time to participate,” one man pointed out, “If we have no farm, we have no life.” Some people were willing to participate, but only after their fields had been prepared and planted. Still others planned to wait and watch what happened to the first few before committing themselves.

For those who did get involved, the sacrifices were sometimes more than just a matter of time. One man who was working with a salary as a coordinator for the project was accused of stealing project funds for personal profit. “It really hurt me what they said,” he remembered in an interview a year later. Another man who was heavily involved told me he often felt ostracized by his neighbors in the community who

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2 These were the same posters I used in the focus group interviews for the stakeholder analysis (see Chapter 3).
perceived him as “mamón” (roughly translated as “brown-noser”) for Rainforest Expeditions.³

Since building the lodge, participation has come in many forms. Some community members work as wage laborers in the lodge—cooking, driving boats, cleaning rooms, and practicing as apprentice guides; others participate by selling foods, materials, or handicrafts; and a handful play a backstage role of coordinating lodge operations and handling management decisions in partnership with Rainforest Expeditions.

Since the lodge has opened, members of the Comité have dedicated many more hours—as volunteers—to the project. Their role has been to remain informed of tourist activities, finances, infrastructure changes, personnel matters, and management decisions. They often raise concerns about their abilities and skills, as they are acutely aware of their responsibility as interlocutors between the community and Rainforest Expeditions. They are especially concerned about how to get more people to participate. At a meeting one year after the lodge opened, they met to discuss how to increase community participation in the business. Some of their ideas were to organize field trips to the lodge, to invite people to work in the logistics end of operations in Puerto Maldonado, and to show videos in the community about ecotourism.

The Challenge of “Fifty-Fifty”

The Ke’eway Association is an innovative concept, particularly because it entails joint decision making between a private company and a local community. So far, however, the community’s participation in management has been relatively passive compared to Rainforest Expeditions’ take-charge approach. In the first few months,

³ These kinds of criticisms came from outside the community as well. Some people working in NGOs who were opposed to the project characterized community members who were involved with Rainforest
several leaders in the community complained that they did not really know what was happening. One complaint was that they were not sure how many tourists were passing through, or how much the community was earning.

The lopsided participation has prevailed not necessarily because the company is stingy with its power or disrespectful of community rights. One of the obstacles to equal participation has been sheer lack of experience. Community members are still uncertain what full participation entails, or how it differs from simply working at the lodge. They hear the words, “you are owners,” but they grapple with the meaning. So often in their history, the responsibilities of conceptualizing, planning, and decision-making have been left to outsiders. Without first hand experience, people have felt limited in their own ability to contribute.

Compounding the lack of experience is a general complacency with social roles. Conditioned to believe in class/race hierarchies between the educated elite from Lima and subsistence producers from the Amazon, many community members have found it difficult to interact with their partners as equals. This should not be surprising since Rainforest Expeditions is, in fact, more powerful than the community both economically and politically. These deeply entrenched power differences cannot be dissolved from one day to the next simply because a legal agreement has been signed.

The owners of the company are as cognizant as their most scathing critics that participation in the project has been far from equal. Just weeks after the lodge opened to the arrival of the first group, the project director from Rainforest Expeditions declared himself nearly burned out. While acknowledging people’s tremendous investment of labor, he felt he had been carrying the management load himself, and vowed that he

Expeditions as untrustworthy and not representative of the community.
would quit unless more community members began participating. In an
uncharacteristically tired voice, he explained, “I realized I had invested everything in the
community and in the project—my whole life. But I felt abandoned, like my partners
wanted me to pull it all together.”

Only one year later, the load has lessened for Rainforest Expeditions, and their
partners have become more active, not only as laborers, but also as decision makers. In
general, community members are more aware of their status and privilege as partners.
Unlike in the first year, everyday discourse in Infierno now reveals a sense of ownership.
In interviews, community members preface many of their opinions and comments about
Posada Amazonas with the phrase, “Because it is ours . . .” One participant described
Posada Amazonas as unusual because “in other places, the people are employees; here,
we are the owners.”

For a few, this sense of ownership came the very afternoon the agreement was
signed, but for most, it came only once the project was up and running, and after they had
invested their own energy, time, and hope in creating it. For some families, participation
may never come. Those who have become actively involved have begun to interact with
company staff from Rainforest Expeditions differently. Though initially hesitant to treat
their partners as equals rather than as employers, doubting their own abilities and
strengths, now community members are more confident. One guide from Lima, after
joining a Comité de Control meeting remarked, “I felt like I was sitting in a meeting with
the Board of Directors.” In addition to becoming more confident, many community
members have begun to recognize that they are knowledgeable in ways their well-
educated partners could never be. To a reporter for the Lima-based newspaper, *El
Comercio, the director from Rainforest Expeditions said, “When we get stuck in a discussion about something that seems to have no obvious resolution, I leave it in their hands, knowing they’ll make the right decision. Many times, [their solution] is much more severe and effective than what I would have decided” (Ribeyro 1996:A1). A member of the Comité explained later, “they have theories, but we have the experience.”

These changes in perception have occurred on both sides. Despite fears that Rainforest Expeditions would irrevocably change the community, so far the learning has gone both ways. From the first year to the third, particularly in how they interact with community members in decision making, the owners have changed considerably. In the first year, the project director had the habit of treating community members as employees rather than as partners. Accustomed to working at an urban pace, he often struggled to pause and listen. Now, he asks questions, consciously treating community members as colleagues. “We used to tell them,” he conceded “but now we listen, leave more of the decisions to them.”

The company has also learned that participation is more than just a marketable phrase for brochures, but also a necessity for the success of the lodge. Quite literally, Rainforest Expeditions could not have created Posada Amazonas without the community’s participation. During the initial collaboration, the owners often advised their partners to think like businesspeople, to take risks, invest, be efficient with their time. Now, after building the lodge, they acknowledge that their efforts have relied substantially on non-capitalist forms of production and organization in Infierno. The communal work parties, for example, were based on the traditional faena in which everyone worked at the same task for equal time with no pay for a communal project.
Though the Ke'eway Association has had success in handling both the strategic management of Posada Amazonas as well as the everyday delivery of services, the partners are now beginning to consider what will happen over the long term and, in particular, how jobs that are currently assumed by Rainforest Expeditions will be passed to the community. Of special concern is mid-level management and how the community will be able to assume full responsibility for such bureaucratic and technical tasks as financial accounting, marketing, and personnel training. For now, Rainforest Expeditions performs all these jobs while providing sporadic and often ad hoc training for community members, but more focused and planned training is necessary, not only so that the community may gain control, but also so that the company can dedicate more time to its other investments.

**Learning Both Ways**

In 1996, Rainforest Expeditions and the Native Community of Infierno agreed to work together in creating the Posada Amazonas ecotourism project. Though they signed a multi-page, legal document stipulating how they would split the profits and the decisions, the everyday practice of collaborating as equals could only be imagined. Onlookers anticipated the worst: the company would dominate the project, the community would participate little beyond providing services for tourists, and local people would be irrevocably changed, culturally, economically, and spiritually, as they became more dependent on the market economy. Few expected that Rainforest Expeditions would change as well.

So far, however, the experience of Posada Amazonas has proven the predictions only partly true. Community members have indeed changed. As they become more involved in running a business, they have become more cognizant of their resources and
how to capitalize on them, and they have begun to forecast farther into the future, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of various development options. In sum, they are thinking more like businesspeople. But the learning has gone both ways. The owners of Rainforest Expeditions have become more appreciative of local skills and traditional forms of organization, more respectful of indigenous knowledge, and more attentive to voices that before remained unheard.
CHAPTER 5
THE ECONOMIC PROMISE OF ECOTOURISM

"Tourists leave money, which gives us income, and with that we are able to achieve conservation."

--Member of the Ke’eway Association, Infierno, 1998

I opened the first chapter with an anecdote about an evening among tourists and community members in Posada Amazonas. In that story, a guide from Rainforest Expeditions was explaining to a group of tourists how he hoped ecotourism might make a difference in Infierno. He revealed that his main interest was in conservation, and he confided, “I just hope the lodge will offer enough income and jobs to convince people to stop hunting and farming. Already, they’ve shown a lot of interest in protecting the Harpy eagles and the river otters, and I think it’s because they know tourists like you will pay to see them.”

I draw attention to this comment because it captures well the sentiment expressed by many proponents of ecotourism. Earlier, I referred to this as the “promise of ecotourism,” and it is the idea that new income and jobs from ecotourism can become powerful incentives for local residents to protect habitats and species. I included comments from conservation organizations, the popular media, and the academy, all of which pointed to income and employment as the main factors of importance in assessing the worth of ecotourism to local communities.
The project in Infierno has also been characterized in economic terms. In an article about Posada Amazonas published in a Peruvian magazine, Mary Margaret Crapper (1998) offered this observation: “As more native communities [like Infierno] start to reap direct economic benefits as owners and partners of tourism services, locals will have more of an incentive, and a challenge, to protect what the tourists come to see” (p. 21).

Also in 1998, a front-page article about Posada Amazonas in Peru’s leading newspaper, El Comercio, had a headline that predicted a similar future for Infierno: “Paradise is in Hell: A native community passes from hunting and extraction to the tourism business” (“El paraíso está en Infierno: Una comunidad nativa pasó de la casa y la recolección al negocio del ecoturismo”). The reporter had suggested that ecotourism in Infierno would eventually replace people’s other subsistence activities. Specifically, with the new jobs from tourism, the article predicted, people in Infierno would soon abandon hunting and other foraging activities. Indeed, as the passage below would suggest, the very act of signing the contract with Rainforest Expeditions seemed to seal forever the fate of everyday life in Infierno:

“The day of May 5, 1996 will always be recorded in the history of the Ese’eja of the community of Infierno of the Tambopata River. On that day, upon signing the first contract of its kind between a private company and a native community, [the Ese’eja] became tourism entrepreneurs, leaving behind the hunting and extraction activities in which they have been involved since ancestral times” (Riberyro 1998).

Not everyone who has observed the project Infierno has agreed with these assessments. In a 1997 issue of the journal, “Environmental Conservation,” three authors with considerable combined experience of research and work in Tambopata predicted that the ecotourism project in Infierno would have little effect on people’s subsistence
activities. Despite the new influx of tourists, and regardless of any economic benefits generated by tourism, the authors argued, people would continue to live as they always had. Specifically, they predicted:

"The Community of Infierno is unlikely to reduce farming or hunting rates in order to accommodate tourism, especially since they apparently plan to emphasize cultural tourism, that is, visiting the village and its farms. ... Even if revenues generated by tourism were to increase local incomes directly, there is no guarantee that increased incomes would reduce the rate in which forests are converted to farmlands or even that the rate of hunting would decrease (Yu et al 1997:135)."

In this chapter, I will address these debates concerning whether or not new economic opportunities from Posada Amazonas will compel people in Infierno to abandon, or at least reduce, their reliance on farming, hunting, and other subsistence activities. Here, I will combine quantitative and qualitative data to describe the dynamics between tourism and subsistence livelihoods in Infierno, both before and after the lodge opened.

I will argue that all of the indicators, at least so far, seem to be pointing in the same direction, towards the conclusion that normal subsistence activities do seem to be subsiding as a result of people’s new involvement in tourism. In fact, the disruption or change in subsistence production was correlated with tourism in two types of comparisons: in the same population before and after tourism, and between populations that had varying levels of participation in tourism.

Earlier, I argued that an economic analysis of ecotourism’s impact was not the only, or the most important, impact of ecotourism. I said that ecotourism has a profound impact on people’s sense of themselves, and their natural environment, what they have to offer to the world, and what they are capable of accomplishing. These empowering qualities of ecotourism are especially pronounced when ecotourism is locally-managed
and participatory. When people are making decisions for themselves, they gain from the mistakes as well as the successes, and they are learning from the process of acting as managers rather than merely earning income.

Yet these arguments need not negate the relevance of examining the extent to which new jobs and income from ecotourism do have impacts on people, particularly on their incentives to protect natural resources. If the analysis were to show that ecotourism is a bankrupt idea (literally), few companies would invest in ecotourism, either in a participatory mode or in any other way. Rather, what I want to illustrate is that the economic incentives alone may be short-sighted. Although increased incomes may help people meet their needs in the short run, more money may or may not provide incentives to protect natural resources over time. We can expect that if people earn more from working in tourism, they will have the means to consume more (in fact, after just one year of new income from tourism, people in Infierno are already spending more Peruvian soles, on average, per month than they did before tourism). Also when people earn more income, they have the ability to purchase tools and inputs that allow them to exploit resources, including fish, game, timber, wild fruits and soils, even more intensively than they did before. All of this implies that the connection between increased incomes and increased conservation is not a simple equation, especially over the long-term as consumption and production patterns shift.

The fact that people are consuming more with more income is not itself a problem for conservation if and when the people who are earning the income are in a position to evaluate for themselves how changes in their own activities are affecting the collective pool of cultural and natural resources. I will elaborate on these ideas in the coming
pages, but in this chapter, I will turn to the economic analysis of tourism in Infierno, exploring how new income and jobs have affected household subsistence production so far.

**Shifts in Methodology**

It was in the second and third years of fieldwork that I focused on the economic analysis, and here my approach shifted methodologically. Rather than conceptualize ecotourism as something affecting the *community* of Infierno, I began to perceive the ecotourism project as a factor that was going to affect *individuals* and *households* in Infierno differentially, depending on whether or not they participated in the project, how they participated, and to what extent they shifted away from other activities. This change in my understanding came from the results of the stakeholder analysis, which showed that not everyone in the community would be involved in and/or affected by the project in the same way. In just the first year, the difference between families involved with the tourism project and those not involved were already apparent. This was the case even though only one person from the community—the project coordinator—was earning any income from the project.

In the first year, the majority of people involved in the ecotourism project were members of the “*Comité de Control*” (which is also sometimes called the “Ecotourism Committee”). Participating in the *Comité* entailed a significant commitment of time, but no extra income. People met several times a month to exchange ideas, debate the by-laws and clauses of the joint venture, organize the logistics for the construction of the lodge, and plan how to keep the rest of the community informed. Though participation in that first year was a bit cerebral and abstract as opposed to physically demanding or
financially lucrative, it nevertheless forged a divide in the community between those who were participating and those who were not.

At times in the evening when most people in Infierno were settling down for sleep, the members of the Comité were walking the dark trails between their homes, meeting around someone’s meal table, and discussing the latest plans. What they were doing with their time, the kinds of things they were talking about, the company they were keeping (often with the urban-based owners and managers of Rainforest Expeditions), and even the food they were eating (typically things like noodles and tomato sauce, canned tuna and rice, crackers and jam, and other purchased foods), differed significantly from that of their neighbors and friends in Infierno.

By making individuals and households within the community my units of analysis (rather than the whole community), I sought to isolate different levels of participation in tourism as explanatory variables and make two types of comparisons among community members. First, I analyzed changes among the same people before and after tourism; and second, I compared differences across community members, depending on how much they participated in tourism. In both types of analyses, I tested hypotheses about the specific and differential impacts of wage labor and new income from tourism on people’s household production and consumption.

In 1997, I first began to gather baseline data on people’s household economic activities. I surveyed about half of the adult heads of household in the community (N=58: 31 men and 17 women; 36 mestizos and 22 Ese Eja). The survey included questions about production from annual crops, fruit trees, and gardens; small and large livestock production; artisanal mining and logging; extractive activities (such as hunting,
fishing, and harvesting of wild fruits and fibers); income and expenses (weekly, monthly, and annual); material wealth and recent purchases; and, opinions about conservation, value of different species of wildlife, community involvement in ecotourism, and perceptions of change in the community, especially as they were related to tourism.

When I returned to Infierno in June 1998, my goal was to revisit the same families and ask the same questions again (though about one-third of the questions were new), this time listening for changes that might have been precipitated by tourism.

I defined households as the physical and social space in which people were sharing decisions, and engaging jointly in subsistence production and the procurement of food, clothing, and shelter (see Netting 1993). Some households consisted of just one individual, while others comprised many members of an extended family, including grown children and their spouses. For the households with more than one adult male and female, I interviewed all of the adults, and, subsequently, when I calculated household-level variables, such as “weekly expenditures,” “number of hectares in pasture,” and other measures of production and consumption, I combined the individual figures.

In both years of the household economic surveys, I used a purposive, or “judgement” sampling method (Bernard 1994). I would have preferred to interview everyone, but not everyone wanted to be interviewed, plus I had some basic logistical obstacles. Random sampling would not have provided me with enough variation in relevant factors, and would have left me with too few observations of certain population segments, so I used purposive sampling. I was careful to include representatives from

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1 For example, some of the homes were unreachable by footpath, and I had no boat. On many occasions, I took advantage of the tour boats passing between the lodge and Puerto Maldonado to pick me up and drop me off at people’s homes.
each of the major stakeholder groups within the community as I had learned would be important from the previous year’s analysis. For example, I was sure to interview virtually all of the men and women who were working at the lodge, as well as those who participated in the Ecotourism Committee. These sub-populations in Infierno were especially critical to my analysis of how ecotourism was affecting people’s livelihoods and values.

What I did not anticipate when I returned to the field in 1998—the first year in which tourists began to arrive—was that nearly half of the people who had begun working at Posada Amazonas were people I had neglected to interview in the previous year. This precluded me from being able to play my key methodological trump card, which was having baseline quantitative data for comparing the effects of tourism before and after people began working at the lodge. For these cases (many were young, unmarried men whom I had not considered “heads of household”), I relied more on cross-sectional data—i.e., people working in tourism at various levels of intensity in the same year—to make comparisons. Years from now, when I return to Infierno to follow up with longitudinal research, I will treat the combined data set from 1997 and 1998 as baseline data for more interesting and comprehensive before/after comparisons.

None of the results of the statistical analyses, when taken alone, were able to provide enough evidence to determine conclusively that new wage labor and income from tourism in Infierno were causing people to reduce their reliance on farming, hunting, and other subsistence activities. However, when the different kinds of analyses were combined, the results were noteworthy because they all reflected the same

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2 I determined who belonged to different kinds of social networks within the community by applying pile sort data to cluster analysis with the ANTHROPAC statistical package (Borgatti 1992; see Chapter 3).
underlying trends. Perhaps the relatively short time scale of my study (four years) precluded me from being able to collect more conclusive data. I suspect that what now appear as relatively weak trends will become more pronounced with time. In general, it is still too early in the project for people to have made the kinds of shifts in subsistence practices that we might be able to detect at a greater scale in the coming years. For now, the data is showing incipient tendencies in how wage labor and income from tourism seems to be affecting subsistence production. With each statistical test, I will include qualitative data to support my interpretations of the numbers. Before presenting the analysis I will review findings from previous studies on the economic impacts of tourism, explaining how each influenced the formulation of my own hypotheses.

**Previous Studies on the Economic Impacts of Tourism**

Tourism has been shown to be a catalyst of changes in the household economy because it leads to new opportunities for wage labor, new sources of cash income, and new information about farm and household technologies (Barkin 1996; Eadington and Smith 1992; Levy and Lerch 1991; Nash 1996). Ecotourism more than other kinds of tourism can cause large changes in the household economy because it usually occurs in relatively isolated areas of the world where people are distant from markets and have little income (Whelan 1991). A small rise in income tends to have a more pronounced effect on the households of the poor than of the rich.

By changing household economies, tourism also affects how people use forests. Specifically, tourism allows people to gain paid employment as cooks, guides, or administrators, and thus raises the opportunity cost of rural labor and reduces the amount of time people spend farming and foraging. Yet new income from tourism may have the
opposite effect on farming and foraging. Increased income may allow people to invest in new technologies and intensify their farming and foraging. In sum, wage labor and income from tourism may have ambiguous effects on how people farm and forage, and on how they use forests.³

Many scholars have predicted that economic benefits from ecotourism will convince local residents to protect forests, but few studies have shown the ambiguous effects wage labor and income from ecotourism might have on how people use forests. The qualitative data from the first year of exploratory research in Infierno revealed early on the dual effects of ecotourism. One member of the community who was hired as a coordinator for the project stopped hunting once his job began. Before earning a wage, he made money from selling game meat in the regional market. He reported that he hunted two or three times a week before working in tourism, and not once (over a period of three months) afterwards. A second person who began to earn cash from tourism by selling woven palm thatch to the lodge told me he was planning to buy a chainsaw with the new cash he earned. Eventually, he said, he would like to dedicate more time to harvesting and selling timber. In the first example, wage labor through tourism led to decreased pressure on wildlife; in the second example, cash income from tourism led to the possibility of increased pressure on forests. These early examples of the “either-or” effects of tourism guided my research in the ensuing months.

³ Other scholars (e.g., Bookbinder et al. 1998) have referred to wage labor and income in tourism respectively as “direct” and “indirect” economic benefits.
Hypotheses 1: Wage Labor and Reduced Time for Subsistence

From what I had read about other host destinations, and what I had already seen in Infierno in the first year of research, I expected that the introduction of wage labor opportunities in tourism would give people incentives to divert time and labor away from subsistence production. I hypothesized that wage labor would be negatively correlated with farming and foraging activities. More specifically, I expected to find that once people began working in tourism as wage laborers, they would clear fewer hectares of forest for annual crops, and they would engage less intensively in hunting and other subsistence activities. I also expected to see this pattern cross-sectionally, between community members with different levels of participation in tourism.

Ethnographic data from studies in other host destinations certainly supported this first hypothesis. Anthony Oliver-Smith (1989) described a case in Spain in which local hosts substituted their labor in farming with work in tourism. Mark Mansperger (1995) analyzed how tourism among Pacific islanders led to the cessation of subsistence activities and made locals more dependent on the outside world. Seiler-Baldinger's (1988) research in the Upper Amazon attributed declines in health among locals to the fact that they moved away from subsistence activities to work in tourism. The case studies suggested that wage labor, introduced through tourism or through any other non-farm activity, raises the opportunity costs of subsistence activities. As people begin to work off-farm, and as the value of their time rises, they begin to invest less time in foraging and agriculture.
Hypothesis 2: New Income and New Consumption

Also from the preliminary research, and after reviewing the literature on the effect of new income on subsistence economies, I hypothesized that cash earned through tourism would result in an intensification, rather than a reduction, of foraging. More specifically, I expected that people who began earning cash from tourism would begin to forage forest resources (timber, game, fish, palm fruits, brazil nuts) more intensively than they did before tourism. I also expected to find differences cross-sectionally (i.e., between those who earned different amounts of new cash from tourism).

Ricardo Godoy et al. (1995, 1997) found that the effects of cash income on foraging varied, depending on the amount of income earned. Poor families are limited in their ability to forage intensively because they lack sufficient income to buy inputs that could improve foraging efficiency, such as shotguns, chainsaws, or tree-climbing equipment. But as income per person increases, and people are able to buy foraging technologies that save on time, people forage more. This theory was supported by Maria Cristina Espinosa’s (1998) doctoral research in the Peruvian Amazon, which showed that men with greater access to cash were able to finance more hunting and fishing expeditions, and thus harvested more.

I predicted that incomes generated by ecotourism, at least in the short run, would have countervailing effects on conservation goals: rather than give people incentives to protect resources, new income might give people the means to intensify the rate at which they extracted resources. Beyond a certain threshold of income, people may begin to decrease their foraging and switch to permanent non-farm work in tourism.
Applying the Theories to Infierno

To begin to apply the theories to the case of Posada Amazonas, I first examined the annual income people were earning from tourism-related activities and compared it to what they were earning in other activities. My general question was simply whether ecotourism could offer, as the theories suggested, a lucrative alternative for community members.

I was easily able to explore this question early in the project because Posada Amazonas was experiencing tremendous success even in its first year. In 1998, the first year in which tourists visited, the lodge recorded an average occupation rate of 37.8%, hosting 1,386 tourists who stayed for an average of 2.3 nights. The average occupation rate in that same year for all of Madre de Dios was just 31% for 2.1 nights, and the total number of tourists to the entire region was 10,732. That means that in its first year of operation, as just one of fourteen ecotourism lodges in the area, Posada Amazonas had captured over 13% of the regional tourist demand, 7% more than its share. In the second full year of operation, the lodge increased its occupation rate to 58%, even with the addition of six extra rooms.

The figures in Table 4 represent the totals of what people earned from their work in Posada Amazonas relative to other non-tourism related activities. The variable “income from tourism” includes salary earned through wage labor at the lodge, as well as cash earned through the sale of timber, palm, cane, agricultural goods, or handicrafts to the lodge. I did not include tips in the total income earned through tourism because it

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4 Total occupation rate equals total number of guests and nights per total number of rooms and nights available.
varied so much from month to month, and because people were generally secretive about how much they earned in tips. As an estimate, employees at Posada Amazonas can earn about US$40.00 to $60.00 per month in tips (Holle, personal communication).

The variable "income outside of tourism" includes money people earned from the sale of agricultural goods, brazil nuts, game meat, pelts, and fish, and from contract labor (not at the lodge). Most of this data I imputed by summing monthly production for different products and different seasons throughout a year, and then multiplying the total production by the average price for the item in that year. For some items, such as avocados, the price varied significantly depending on the time of year. For these items, I averaged the price for different seasons and then multiplied each average by the total production for each respective season.

It would have been impossible to observe and confirm with my own measurements how much every household produced for each item, and so I relied on people's recollection of how many sacks of oranges, how many bunches of bananas, how many barrels of brazil nuts, etc. they sold throughout the year. Though accuracy is a problem in this kind of data that is pulled from memory (see Bernard et al. 1984), I discovered that people were so quick and forthcoming about exactly how much they had produced that I began to feel confident that, in fact, they did know. My explanation for this is that small-scale producers who are earning an average of less than $6,000 per year generally, out of necessity, keep track of every sol that is earned and spent. The fact that I found high correlation between what people told me in 1997 and what they reported to the same questions in 1998 (in some cases, people even remembered exactly what they had told me the previous year, such as how many kilos of rice they sold that year, or how
much they had earned from the sale of peccary meat) also gave me confidence in the imputed data.

Table 4 Average Annual Income from Tourism vs. Other Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Income From Tourism (N=58)</th>
<th>Income From Other Activities (N=58)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Annual Income</strong></td>
<td>2,205.81 (US$ 735.27)</td>
<td>5,984.62 (US$ 1,994.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
<td>2,694.23 (US$ 898.07)</td>
<td>5,622.00 (US$ 1,919.25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = -4.429, p=0.000 \]

The amount of income the lodge can generate is limited: it pays salaries to about twelve or thirteen full-time and part-time staff persons, and it offers cash to families who sell goods to the company. More than a year after Posada Amazonas was built, very few families in Infierno had abandoned their subsistence activities entirely to work in tourism. An exception was a family who derived all of their income from tourism because both adults were earning salaries from the lodge. In 1998, that family earned approximately US$4,320.\(^5\) The highest recorded household income from tourism in 1998 was $5,017, and the lowest amount was zero. In most cases people who worked in tourism were earning more than US$735.00 (as shown in the table) because they continued to work in other income-earning activities (see figures 6 and 7)

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\(^5\) Both the husband and wife in this couple were able to work because their extended family provided substantial support in terms of caring for their three young children. Most families, in particular the women, do not have such liberty away from childcare responsibilities.
Diversification is critical to the long-term success of subsistence production in the Amazon, and this is true even in Infierno where people have the option to invest more of their time in tourism. Though the lodge is offering new alternatives for making a living, most people continue to engage in a variety of activities, including swidden farming, raising cattle and small livestock, hunting, fishing, brazil nut collecting, and artisanal mining. Of the approximately 80 households in Infierno, only 12 were earning more than 50% of the total income from tourism—either from wages or from the sale of goods.
This may change with time. In three to five years, after the debts to financiers are paid, the lodge is expected to generate annual revenues of $100,000 that will be split among the entire community. That equals about $1,250 per household per year from tourism, which is about 21% of what the average household was earning through other economic activities in 1998.⁶

The partners in the project, Rainforest Expeditions, have acknowledged the fact that ecotourism will not make all families much richer than they already are, at least not

![Main Source of Income Across Households](image)

**Main Source of Income Across Households**

1998: 3rd Year of Project  
(N=68)

- **Agriculture**: 60%
- **Palm thatch**: 0%
- **Timber**: 0%
- **Tourism**: 15%
- **NGO project**: 5%
- **Game meat**: 3%
- **Mining**: 2%
- **Brazil nuts**: 3%
- **Livestock**: 2%
- **Contract labor**: 6%
- **Other**: 4%

*Figure 7: Main Source of Income Across Households (1998)*

⁶ In addition to the regular revenues generated by the lodge, people may also have additional money-making opportunities in the future by developing satellite projects that capitalize on the tourist market. Already, people in Infierno have formed committees to begin planning how to make and market handicraft
quickly. Rather than provide a significant increase in income for every individual family, the hope is to provide new funds for communal projects, such as a secondary school, an improved medical clinic, new technology for processing agricultural products, new markets for locally produced goods, etc. Nor did anyone expect that all of the families in Infierno would give up their other activities to work in tourism. As the director of the project remarked, "Ecotourism cannot be the sole solution to all of the community’s problems. People subsist through a variety of activities: they farm, hunt, fish, collect brazil nuts, raise livestock. And now they can add ecotourism. But they will not replace everything they do to work with ecotourism."

In some ways, it is good that people have not switched entirely to wage labor because there are risks for those who do. In the possible case of economic bust in the tourism industry (as Peru experienced in the early 1990s), families in Infierno are not currently at risk of losing their subsistence security, namely the availability of food staples. Many studies have shown that the tourism industry is especially prone to boom-bust cycles. People on the demand side of tourism, in places like the U.S. and Europe, tend to sacrifice their vacations first whenever their disposable income takes a drop. This means that during economically depressed periods, workers dependent on the tourism industry for their livelihood usually experience an even tighter pinch than does the rest of the economy. As a result, small producers who divert time and labor away from subsistence to work in tourism are hardest hit by bust periods. In sum, tourism can be a

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products and value-added agricultural goods (like jams and preserves, juices, etc.) that could be sold to tourists.
high-stakes enterprise for small-scale producers, especially those living at the subsistence level who are most vulnerable to economic shocks.

The decision to work at Posada Amazonas is not only one of subsistence risk, but also of intense personal commitment. Every person from among the twelve or so full-time staff members (from the community) whom I interviewed literally let out deep breaths of exhaustion when they reviewed for me their work routines. A typical day for a boat driver, a cook, a housekeeper, or anyone else who worked at Posada Amazonas in 1998 began with a wake-up call at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. to light the lanterns, prepare a buffet breakfast, set the tables, and haul tourists' backpacks and duffel bags from the guestrooms down a very steep and often slippery riverbank to the boats. Throughout the day, they changed beds, sanitized showers, swept floors, prepared and served meals, led walks through the forest, identified and told stories about flora and fauna, paddled and navigated catamarans and boats, ordered supplies, handled logistics over the radio, and more and more and more.

The day ended only at about 11:00 p.m. or midnight, after the last tourist had gone to bed, the tables had been cleared, the kitchen had been cleaned and prepped for breakfast, and the next day’s itineraries for as many as four or five different tour groups had been coordinated down to the last minute. Many staff workers were sleeping as little as four or five hours a night. As if that weren’t enough, most workers attended nightly English classes offered in a corner of the kitchen by one of the volunteer teachers (brought in by Rainforest Expeditions). The intense level of dedication to Posada Amazonas was epitomized for me in the many evenings I wandered into the kitchen hoping for a tea and a casual conversation only to find people carefully pronouncing,
“This is my house” or “That is a macaw” as they dried dishes, chopped carrots, or restocked the shelves.

Amazingly, people carried on in their work for days, sometimes weeks, without seeing their families for more than a brief visit to the community between tour groups, or in the best case scenario, for an afternoon of soccer on Sundays. Because Posada Amazonas is so far upriver by canoe from where most people live, the commitment to work there necessarily entails being apart from one’s family. Especially for the parents of young children, this condition makes the work doubly challenging. Many workers said they liked the job, but wished they could see their children more often. Later in this chapter, I’ll address the implications of this situation for gender differences in who’s participating in tourism.

The long hours and the distance from home all for a so-so income made me wonder why anyone from Infierno would choose to work at Posada Amazonas. In the economic analysis of how new wage labor and income from tourism was affecting people in Infierno, this became my first question. If working there was obviously not the answer to getting rich quickly, and if the work was so demanding, why work there?

People told me about other kinds of benefits they were gaining. For one, wages from employment provided a more reliable income than what they could be earning through agriculture and foraging. (And here, I should note that in 1998 workers at Posada Amazonas were earning US$65.00 per month more than what they would have earned had they been working in any of the other lodges in the region). The knowledge that “next month is provided for” and that the family will be able to rely on a certain amount of income to meet household needs is an advantage for anyone, but especially for
subsistence producers who often experience ebbs and flows in their income as a result of uncontrollable circumstances, such as abrupt climate changes.

Though wages in tourism are not immune to bust periods (as the case of Peru has shown), wages from employment are more steady, at least over the short term, than are subsistence-based earnings. This became apparent in my conversations with the workers who made comments like, “The salary is not a lot, but it is more certain (mas seguro),” and “I know how much I’ll be earning. Now I can plan better.”

A second benefit to working at the lodge is that it offered a kind of social safety net. Many staff members at Posada Amazonas, as well as the members of the Comité (who earn no extra income for their investment of time), have developed professional associations and friendships with the urban-based guides and administrators of Rainforest Expeditions. These new relationships that began to cross well-entrenched boundaries of race, class, and privilege presented new opportunities for both sides. For the people of Rainforest Expeditions, there was the chance to learn more about the region, its social and cultural history, its natural environment, and customs of the people, from the people who call the region home. Many of the guides, in particular, described their interactions with community members as experiences that were especially rich. Many also admitted that it was challenging to overcome some of the basic differences in cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

For the members of the community, the relationship with Rainforest Expeditions led to new friendships, but it also offered a kind of informal kinship or compadrazgo. These alliances have already proven valuable for community members on a couple of occasions. For example, in 1998, one of the workers from the community suffered a
devastating accident that left his leg severely injured. The company paid for his evacuation to a Lima surgeon, as well as most of the subsequent hospital expenses. Had he been forced to stay in the Puerto Maldonado for treatment, doctors there said they probably would have had to amputate his leg. This example and others show that the joint venture between the company and the community has created a at-large system of compadrazgo in which both sides rely on the other for different kinds of support.7

A third advantage to working at Posada Amazonas is that community members are gaining training and skills that they may someday be able to use elsewhere. One man was consciously focusing on learning as much as he could be moving “up” and “across” several different positions, from boat driver, to guide, to personnel manager. His plan was eventually to leave the region and seek opportunities for work in the northern Peruvian Amazon. “With what I have learned,” he noted, “I can seek jobs in other places in the future. I won’t be unemployed.”

Finally, a fourth non-monetary but material benefit from working at Posada Amazonas is the food. Though workers do not partake in the same fare as tourists (unless they are training to be guides and thus join meal time with tourists), the food they do eat in the staff kitchen tends to be more diverse and nutritionally balanced than what they would normally consume at home. As one community member visiting the lodge laughed, “Well, the guys who have started working here have certainly fattened up.”

7 Skeptics might argue that the joint venture is more like a traditional patron-client relationship than one of compadrazgo (though, in fact, the two are not mutually exclusive). I would argue that it is more egalitarian than a patron-client relationship because both sides have joined as partners, rather than as a boss and peons. Although in practice the relations of power between the company and the community are still uneven for reasons I have suggested in Chapter Four, at least in theory, and certainly in people’s minds, the two are partners and joint owners of the lodge. I think people’s perceptions alone, even if they are not yet fully actualized in everyday practice, set the tone for relatively equal and mutually advantageous relations of compadrazgo.
For community members who do not work at the lodge, Posada Amazonas also offers certain advantages beyond just the hope of trickled down revenues. For small-scale entrepreneurs, the lodge offers a captive market of approximately 3,000 tourists per year for the sale of handicrafts, foods, and other items. The fact that tourists have nowhere else to choose from when they are in the lodge means that community members have the opportunity to experiment with both the quality and quantity of their products. And because tourists are already answering evaluation forms about their vacation experience, producers from Infierno can attach a short marketing survey to the evaluations to explore the kinds of products and services tourists may be interested in buying. The lodge offers rapid feedback from buyers and sellers and ultimately serves as a laboratory for testing what sells and what doesn’t; this, in turn, ensures reduced risk in people’s investment.

In a similar vein, the lodge reduces the costs for transporting and marketing goods. Because the lodge is located within Infierno’s territory, community members are able to take advantage of the daily movement of tour boats to transport their items. This is a significant advantage for products people usually try to sell in the main market in Puerto Maldonado. Most people do not have motorized canoes, cars, motorcycles, or even bicycles, and they are dependent on local taxis and intermediaries to transport their goods to market. This cost is eliminated for goods people sell to Posada Amazonas.

**Unraveling “Participation”**

Important to my analysis of the impacts of tourism on people in Infierno is the acknowledgement that not all people in Infierno participate in tourism equally. Some people participate directly, interacting with tourists on a regular basis as guides, artisans,
or service staff; others are involved only behind the scenes, working as support staff for logistics or as wholesalers of foods and supplies. People also differ in terms of how much time and energy they invest in tourism: some are working as full-time staff with wages; others are contracting their labor occasionally, or earning cash only through the sale of construction materials, agricultural goods, or handicrafts. In teasing apart these differences in how people participate (or choose not to participate) in tourism, I have sought to understand what factors influence who participates, why, and in what ways. In other words, my goal has been to explore not only what tourism determines in people’s lives, but also what about people’s lives determines whether or not they work in tourism.

The following sections contain analyses of the links between participation in tourism and other productive activities. I examined “participation in tourism” from two angles: 1) What causes it? 2) What does it cause? With the cross-sectional data, I have individual- and household-level characteristics for people who work in Posada Amazonas with varying levels of participation. Using the panel data, I compared two data sets for the same people between 1997 and 1998 to track change in their lives as the tourism project developed.

Russell Bernard (1994) has written that “many of the most interesting variables in social science are complex and can’t easily be assessed with single indicators” (p. 291). “Participation” is one such variable. To make “participation” an ordinal variable rather than a simple binary variable, I have assigned units of analysis to various dimensions of the variable “participation” and created an index. Different measures within the index are ways of concretizing, or operationalizing the concept of “participation,” but none of the
measures, taken alone, captures the complexity of participation. Table 5 shows the various dimensions of participation in 1997 and 1998.

The weakness of the index is that “more” or “less participation” is somewhat subjective. A person who sells materials to the lodge, is a member of the Ecotourism Committee, and never interacts with tourists might have a higher participation score than a person who interacts with tourists everyday but has not sold materials to the lodge and is not a member of the Ecotourism Committee. In general, however, the index matches people’s general perception of who participates a lot and who participates little in tourism.

Table 5 Explanation of Participation Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Participation (1998)</th>
<th>This is an index that includes ten criteria:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Membership in Ecotourism Committee;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- guardian of Harpy eagle nest;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- artisan;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- interaction with tourists (7 levels between “no interaction” and “close daily interaction”);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- number of days contribute volunteer labor to the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- percentage of income earned through tourism (5 levels, 0-100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- number of different products sold to the lodge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- previous employment with Rainforest Expeditions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participant in ecotourism training workshop;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participant in 1996 English classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Participation (1997)</th>
<th>This is an index that includes seven criteria (in 1997, the ways in which one could participate in tourism were fewer than in 1998)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- income from sale of materials (palm thatch, timber, cane) to the lodge (3 levels);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- member of Ecotourism Committee;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- guardian of Harpy eagle nest;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- number of different products sold to the lodge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- previous employment with Rainforest Expeditions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participant in ecotourism training workshop;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participant in 1996 English classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Household Participation (1998) | This variable is only for 1998, and it is simply the highest individual participation score taken for either the male or female head of each household. |
Informally, I tested the validity of the index by asking six people affiliated with the project (i.e., guides and other researchers) who they thought from the community was most involved in the project. The answers matched closely the list of top ten or so participants whom I had identified using only the index. To qualify the word “closely,” I mean that each of the six persons I asked to name “who participates most” listed the same nine or ten individuals with the highest participation, with only a few differences in specific ranking. Also the people they picked were not simply the people who were working at the lodge (versus being involved in some other way). For these reasons, I felt reasonably confident that the index was a valid measure of the complex variable of participation.

First, I will explore what causes participation, and second, what does participation cause? Figure 8 shows the distribution of different levels of participation—most common was a low participation score of less than 3. As the level of participation
increased, the number of cases decreased. This I expected, for especially in the early years of the project, few people either had the opportunity to get involved or were willing to take the risk (see Chapter 4).

Table 6 shows that the maximum score for individual participation increased to 17 points from only 7 between 1997 and 1998. This is because in 1997, the lodge was under construction, and tourists visited the community only sporadically and for just a few hours to visit the Harpy eagle nests. In general, people in Infierno had few opportunities to participate in tourism, aside from selling construction materials (palm thatch, wood, cane) to the Association, serving on the Ecotourism Committee, or acting as a “Guardian” for one of the Harpy eagle nests. In 1998, the opportunities to participate increased dramatically—essentially, all the wage labor positions opened up as well as the possibilities for selling handicrafts and other items to tourists.

The tables and figures below show the individual characteristics of the people I interviewed, and the how they were distributed over different levels of participation in

Table 6 Summary Statistics for Participation in 1997 and 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual Participation 1997</th>
<th>Individual Participation 1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum</strong></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum</strong></td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Deviation</strong></td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For half of the sample (those whom I had not interviewed in 1997), I relied on people’s recollection to calculate “individual participation” for 1997.
tourism. As Table 7 and Figure 9 show, the fewest number of respondents, across four main ethnic categories, had “high” participation scores. People who identified themselves as part Ese Eja (because they had a father or mother who was Ese Eja) were the best represented in the “high” category. These were generally the people who participated in the Ecotourism Committee, and/or interacted with tourists on a regular basis, and/or earned a high percentage of their overall annual income from tourism, and/or had worked with Rainforest Expeditions in the past.

Best represented in the category of “low participation” was the ribereño population. These were the people who had perhaps attended a training workshop, or

Table 7: Participation in Tourism by Ethnic Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Participation</th>
<th>Andean</th>
<th>Ese Eja</th>
<th>Ribereño</th>
<th>Part-Ese Eja</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi-square: 6.076; p-value: 0.415

Figure 9: Ethnic Group and Participation in Tourism
sold palm thatch to the Association, or participated in a communal work party to build the lodge. Few people in this category participated in more than one activity that required a significant investment of their time and/or resulted in any substantial new income.

Most people from all four ethnic groups were clustered in the category of “middle participation.” These are the people who worked in the communal labor parties to help build the lodge, participated in planning meetings and/or attended training workshops, and perhaps sold a few produce items or handicrafts to the Association.

In terms of age differences in various levels of participation, Table 8 and Figure 10 show that community members between the ages of 26 and 40 years represented the majority in the category of “high participation.” Generally, these are the people who

Table 8: Participation in Tourism by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Participation</th>
<th>15-25 years</th>
<th>26-40 years</th>
<th>41-60 years</th>
<th>61-75 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Age and Participation in Tourism
had children old enough to contribute to household labor needs. Elders in the community, those between 61 and 75 years of age had no representation in the category of “high participation.”

Figure 11 shows the age distribution of the people I interviewed. A critical gap in my sample was the men between 15 and 25 years of age. As I mentioned earlier, these were people I neglected to interview because they did not appear in my roster as “heads of household.” Though many men at that age have already married in Infierno, they tend to remain hidden (at least to me) as heads of household because they either live with their wives’ families, or they migrate temporarily out of the community to work in mining, or they enlist in the military. I missed interviewing men in this age cohort in the first year of household interviews simply because I did not consider their importance either to the community-based economy or to the project.

![Age Distribution of Respondents](image)

**Figure 11: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Fortunately, by the second year of the surveys, once the lodge had been built, I discovered that many young men were active participants in the project, either through wage labor positions, or as producers of raw materials, or as manual laborers in the
construction of the lodge facilities. These young men were precisely the members of Infierno who, in many ways, were most able to participate in the project: they were young with few obligations, either because they did not have children or because they had a relatively small chacra, they were physically fit, and they were keen to learn new skills that they could apply to other jobs in the future. Though I was able to interview many of these young men later in the second year of the surveys, they remained relatively underrepresented in my analysis.

Gender is another key variable that was strongly correlated with who participated in tourism and in what ways. Figure 12 shows that, in the category of “high participation,” virtually no women were represented. Generally, this is the case because gender roles in Infierno assign women as responsible for childcare. At least at the time of the research, it was impossible for women to work at the lodge and also care for their

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**Figure 12: Men’s and Women’s Participation in Tourism**

![Bar graph showing the level of participation by gender in tourism categories: Low, Middle, High.](image)
children. Working at the lodge implies living there (because it is far upriver from people’s homes). For most women, the possibility of leaving the household and the children is simply not an option.

Especially in the first year of the project, most of the women in had no plans to get intensely involved, but the situation in their households was changing nevertheless. Though women were not clearing trails, debating the by-laws of the agreement, or participating in English classes, they were affected by the project, often through the participation of their spouses. If their husbands or older sons were involved in the project, that meant there would be new constraints on men’s time for farming and other productive activities.

Changes for the men certainly implied subsequent shifts in women’s responsibilities. Women whose husbands and sons were involved were generally spending more time alone as they maintained the household. In addition to their normal chores that included a full day of washing clothes in the river, cooking, caring for young children, maintaining chickens and other small livestock, several women also became responsible for attending meetings in their husbands’ stead, working in the chacra, and selling produce to taxis and intermediaries in the main market in Puerto Maldonado. For every man who became involved in tourism, there was a woman who was taking on more and more responsibilities in the household, essentially becoming a single head of household.

Not only were women doing more, they were also doing different kinds of things. Maria, a woman who later began to work at the lodge herself, became involved first when her husband took on the position of community coordinator. In the first months, she
often was cooking for groups of men who were involved in planning for or building the lodge. Even what she was cooking changed: her family no longer relied on food they had produced, but rather on food they had purchased (or had been purchased for them by Rainforest Expeditions). Also there was new income available to purchase new clothes and medicines, and new items for the household, such as cooking utensils, plastic food containers, radios, or even, in a couple of cases, televisions (operated by battery).

The relationships with Rainforest Expeditions also meant that Maria’s family developed new ties of compadrazgo. The social circles in which she and her family were interacting changed. She developed friendships with the people of Rainforest Expeditions, the staff in Puerto Maldonado, and researchers like myself who were involved in the tourism project.

In addition to ethnicity, age, and gender, I also examined the education level as a factor that might be influencing who was participating in the project. Figure 13 shows the education distribution of the people I interviewed.

![Figure 13: Education of Respondents](image)

Figure 13: Education of Respondents
Table 10: Regression: Income and Education

Dependent Variable (Y): Annual Income from Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>P(2 tail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.636</td>
<td>0.684</td>
<td>2.391</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Education in Years</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>1.505</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 101 men and women; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.012; Standard error: 3.229

Table 10 shows the results of a simple regression. The coefficient for education is positive, indicating a positive association between the number of years a person has studied in school, and the annual income he or she was earning from tourism in 1998. Though the coefficient is positive, it is very small, and not statistically significant. This indicates that the opportunity to participate actively in Posada Amazonas did not require an extensive formal education. What was more important was the flexibility to work away from home (which for most women was impossible), a willingness to learn new skills and work routines, and a basic knowledge of local natural resources.

What Does Participation Cause?

In this section I turn to the second question of what does participation cause. In some ways, I have already answered this for the case of women whose spouses were working in tourism. But here, I want to address more specifically the dynamics between work in tourism and subsistence production. Table 11 shows the variables I was most interested in testing as dependent factors whose variation could be explained by the independent variable of level of participation in tourism. In comparison with the income figures I presented in Table 4 of this chapter, the figures in Table 11 appear extremely low. This is because I divided soles to 1/1000 to be able to generate regression coefficients with whole numbers. (Readers should keep this in mind if the regression
coefficients seem deceptively large.) The average exchange rate for currency in 1997 was 2.664 nuevo soles to the dollar; and in 1998, 2.930 nuevo soles to the dollar. In Table 11, I explain how I calculated several of the main variables of interest. Tables 12 and 13 provide summary statistics for the key household economic variables for 1997 and 1998.

Table 11 Explanation of Key Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total annual income</td>
<td>Imputed from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of materials to build the lodge (palm thatch, timber, cane);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of agriculture products (either to the lodge or to the main market);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of handicrafts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ wages (either in tourism or elsewhere);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of brazil nuts, game meat and fish, medicinal plants, palm fruits;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ contract labor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ remittances from friends and relatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from tourism</td>
<td>Imputed from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of materials to build the lodge (palm thatch, timber, cane);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ agricultural products sold to the lodge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ sale of handicrafts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ wages earned at the lodge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from palm and timber</td>
<td>Many people earned by selling palm thatch and timber to build the lodge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I included this as “income from tourism.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage income</td>
<td>This includes income earned only through employment at the lodge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from activities other</td>
<td>Imputed from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than tourism</td>
<td>▪ sale of agricultural products, brazil nuts, game meat and fish;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ wages from employment outside the lodge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ contract labor;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ remittances from friends and family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annuals</td>
<td>Number of hectares of primary or secondary forest cleared per household for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a young swiddens (corn, rice, manioc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth in stock</td>
<td>This is an ordinal variable measuring sum of household goods,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>including: radio television, bicycle, boat, motorcycle, and chainsaw.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 Household-level Variables in 1997 (N=57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Income palm/timber</th>
<th>Hectares cleared for Annuals</th>
<th>Heads of Cattle</th>
<th>Brazil nuts sold (% of barrels)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2.329</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>11.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>12.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Household-level Variables in 1998 (N=68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Annual income</th>
<th>Income from tourism</th>
<th>Income from Tourism wages</th>
<th>Percent Income from Tourism</th>
<th>Hectares cleared for Annuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>27.73</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>30.04</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>28.77</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using these key household economic variables for 1997 and 1998, Table 14 shows a matrix of bivariate pearson’s correlation statistics. Of particular note is the relationship between “F” (Income from wages in 1998) and “A” (Total hectares cleared for agriculture in 1997 and 1997). The correlation statistic is relatively high and negative (-0.30). This indicates that wage labor in Posada Amazonas is negatively associated with the number of hectares people clear for agriculture. Because of the problem of endogeneity (or reverse causality) in this simple correlation, I cannot say that wage labor in tourism causes people to reduce the number of hectares people clear, only that the correlation is negative.
Another relationship of special note in Table 14 is the strong positive association between “B” (Number of heads of cattle in 1997 and 1998) and “D” (Income earned from timber). Timber income, in this case, is that which was earned through sales to the Ke’eway Association to build the lodge. Therefore, timber sales here should be interpreted as a kind of benefit from tourism. Because it is strongly correlated with

Table 14 Bivariate Analysis, Household-Level Variables (Pearson’s correlation statistic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“B,” number of heads of cattle (0.58), it seems that participation in tourism is not always correlated with the trends conservationists hope to find. Several households who earned handsomely from the sale of timber to the Association reinvested their added income the following year to purchase cattle.

In sum, the bivariate analyses suggest that different kinds of participation in tourism may affect the nature of subsequent impacts on the environment. People were able to earn income from the tourism project, but through timber extraction. This suggests that not all activities associated with ecotourism necessarily result in reduced pressure on natural resources. In the case of Posada Amazonas, people were cutting and selling timber (though not in vast quantities) specifically to sell to the Association to be used in the construction of the lodge. In a simple economic analysis, this new income may have appeared simply as a “benefit from tourism” and thus not distinguished from wage labor, which has different demands on people’s time and subsequently on subsistence practices and the use of natural resources.

In an economic analysis that distinguishes types of participation in tourism, the links between economic benefits and the subsequent impacts on forests can be made clearer. Note that the correlation between timber income and wage income from tourism was negative (-0.166), implying that the people who were selling timber were not also engaged in wage labor. This suggests that direct participation in tourism through wage labor may indeed, as theories about ecotourism suggest, create economic conditions to protect biological diversity. Other kinds of participation, such as selling products to the company, may or may not generate economic incentives to conserve. In the case of
timber income from the project, much of it was used to invest in new cattle production—not the kind of activity most conservationists hope to promote through ecotourism.

Multiple regression analysis can add to our understanding of the earlier question “What causes participation in tourism?” Here, I have treated “participation” as an interval variable, though, in fact, it is an ordinal variable. For purposes of data analysis, an ordinal variable with seven legitimate ranks can be treated exactly as if it were an interval variable. Many researchers treat ordinals with just five ranks as if they were intervals, because association between interval-level variables can be analyzed using the most powerful statistics (Agresti 1986).

The regression models I present are probabilistic (as opposed to deterministic) in that I am modeling the mean of the dependent variable as a linear function of each of the independent variables. In each regression, I present the adjusted R-squared value rather than the basic R-squared value. Both provide the population coefficient of determination, which measures the proportion of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the simultaneous predictive power of all the independent variables through the multiple regression model. The sample value of R-squared tends to overestimate the population coefficient of determination, especially when the sample size is relatively small (as is the case with my data). A better estimate is given by the adjusted R-squared value, which tells how good the model is for explaining variance in the dependent variable, while controlling for sample size and number of independent variables added to the model (Agresti 1986).

Table 15 shows the regression statistics for the relationship between the dependent variable of individual participation in tourism in 1998, and the independent
variables of gender, age, and education. Not all of the variables included in the model were significant, and there is evidence of multi-collinearity between gender and education. When gender is removed from the model, education becomes a more significant factor for determining participation. Though the variance explained by this model is not very high (adjusted R-squared=0.266), the overall model is significant at a p-value of 0.000.

Table 15 Regression: Participation in 1998 and Individual Profile

Dependent Variable (Y): Individual Participation in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>P(2-tail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.002</td>
<td>1.484</td>
<td>3.370</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Gender (Male=1; Female=0)</td>
<td>3.502</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>5.061</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2: Age in years</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-2.386</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3: Education in years</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>1.020</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 114 men and women; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.267; Standard error: 3.378 (F-ratio 14.733; P-value 0.000)

The p-values indicate that gender (p-value 0.000) and age (p-value 0.019) are the two most significant variables in explaining the variance in individual participation. This coincides with the findings from the descriptive analysis. Those who participated most in Posada Amazonas were more likely to be young men. Most significantly, both in a real world and statistical sense, gender is the characteristic that accounts for whether or not a person participates.

Bivariate and multivariate analyses can also improve the descriptive analysis of the question of “What does participation in tourism cause?” To begin, Table 16 shows that people who work in tourism are spending more on monthly expenditures. Households with “low participation” reported to spend, on average, US$98 per month,
whereas households with “high participation” reported an average of US$119 per month. The p-value of the t-statistic (0.073) is not significant at an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 16: Monthly Expenditures by Participation in Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Monthly Expenditures</th>
<th>t-stat (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Participation (0-3 points)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(288 nuevos soles); US$98</td>
<td>-1.820 (0.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Participation (13-17 points)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(349 nuevos soles); US$119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next analysis, Table 17 shows the statistics for regressing the dependent variable of total annual income in 1998 against several household-level, independent variables. Results of the analysis reveal that household participation has a positive, but not statistically significant correlation with total annual income, when controlling for participation for whether or not a person is Ese Eja and the number of hectares cleared for agriculture. Overall the model is statistically significant (p-value 0.002).

Table 17 Regression: Total Annual Income in 1998 and Household Participation

Dependent Variable (Y): Total Annual Income in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>P(2 tail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.041</td>
<td>2.166</td>
<td>2.327</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Household Participation</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>1.697</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2: Ese Eja (1=yes; 0=no)</td>
<td>-5.929</td>
<td>1.572</td>
<td>3.770</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3: Hectares Cleared for Annuals (1997)</td>
<td>-0.271</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>-0.456</td>
<td>0.650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 56 Households; Adjusted squared multiple: R: 0.201; Std error of estimate: 5.781 (F-ratio = 5.606; P-value = 0.002)
One of my main hypotheses was that participation in tourism would lead to fewer numbers of hectares cleared per year for agriculture. Overall, in 1997, the total number of hectares of forest cleared for agriculture by a sample of 32 households was 53 hectares. In 1998, the first year in which people were participating fully in tourism as wage laborers, the total number of hectares cleared by the same 32 households was 58.75 hectares. Without differentiating how people participated (either through wage labor or through the sale of materials to the Association), the trend shows an increase in forest clearance coinciding with an increase in tourism activity. Though, as Table 18 shows, the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 18: Hectares Cleared by Same Households (1997 to 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>Mean Number of Hectares Cleared</th>
<th>Total Hectares Cleared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.836</td>
<td>58.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[t\text{-stat} = -0.650; \text{p-value} = 0.518\]

In examining more carefully the differences in how people participated, the increase in the number of hectares cleared is explained by some kinds of tourism activities. Specifically, if people's participation came through wage labor (rather than selling timber to the lodge, for example), then, on average, they began to clear fewer hectares of forest for agriculture.

The results of a simple regression Table 19 are useful first for showing that, as percent of total income from tourism increases, percent of total income from agriculture

---

8 While I discuss clearance of forest, I am lacking data as to whether the clearance for each new swidden was created in primary or secondary growth. Preparing a swidden in primary forest entails a much greater investment of labor to fell large or hard-wooded trees (Alexiades 1999:148).
decreases. The negative sign of the coefficient indicates that agriculture and tourism may be at odds with each other.

Table 19 Regression: Income from Tourism and Income from Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable (Y): Percent Income from Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Percent Income from Agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 57 households; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.240; Standard error: 25.320 (F-ratio: 32.330; p-value: 0.000)

Table 20 shows that individual participation in tourism correlates negatively and significantly to the total number of hectares people cleared for annuals. In the first year of surveys, 1997, when the lodge was under construction, “participation” in tourism came mostly through the sale of timber and palm. Thus the economic benefits from tourism in 1997 were primarily cash rather than wage labor. In the second year of surveys, 1998, the lodge had been built, relatively large numbers of tourists (about 3,000 that year) were visiting, and people were beginning to participate through wage labor. The signs for the coefficients for each year—the effect on hectares cleared for annuals—are different, allowing for the possibility that different types of participation have differing outcomes for people’s decisions to clear forest for agriculture.

Table 20: Regression: Hectares Cleared for Annuals (1998) and Participation in Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable (Y): Hectares Cleared for Annuals (1998)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Individual participation (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2: Individual participation (1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 59 men and women; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.137; Standard error: 1.272 (F-ratio: 5.603; p-value: 0.006)
Table 21 shows that the independent variable of wage income from tourism is negatively correlated with the frequency of hunting, and the relationship is statistically significant (t-stat = -2.476; p-value = 0.015). The numbers in this table match what I was learning more generally from talking to people in Infierno. One of the first persons in the community to become actively engaged in the project was a man who identified himself as part Ese Eja (on his paternal side) and who invested most of time, and earned most of his subsistence and cash income from hunting wild game and selling it in the market. Because he was especially eager to get the project going in Infierno in 1996, Rainforest Expeditions hired him at a monthly wage to coordinate community-based planning. Within just a couple of months of earning a wage from this new activity, he gave up hunting entirely. “I simply do not have time,” he said. His motives to stop were not necessarily based on a new conservation ethic he had gained from tourism, but rather on the practical fact that he was busy doing other things for a living. His experience, early in the project, was one of the stories that initially influenced the research hypotheses.

Table 21 Regression: Frequency of Hunting and Wages from Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable (Y): Frequency of Hunting</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-stat</th>
<th>P(2 tail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>2.215</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1: Wages from tourism</td>
<td>-0.369</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>-2.476</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2: Gender (Male=1; Female=0)</td>
<td>1.393</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>7.674</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3: Age</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>-1.835</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 102 men and women; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.379; Standard error: 0.892 (F-ratio: 21.564; p-value: 0.000)

The coordinator’s story is useful for the thesis, but admittedly it is an outlier: few people in Infierno dedicate so much time to hunting for an income as he did, and fewer still have become so deeply involved as he (and his wife) later did. Yet, many men who
were working at the lodge told me similar stories. Time and again, the comment was, “I used to hunt, but not anymore.” On a prompt of, “Why?” they’d look at me with disbelief for my apparent ignorance of the obvious and ask, “With what time?”

My point is, though the statistical analyses are weak (i.e., an adjusted R-squared of 0.379 in Table 21, and other low figures in other tables), they nevertheless support what I would have expected from talking to people. Indeed, even an armchair anthropologist might have been able to figure this one out without any empirical data: new demands on people’s time through wage labor will curb their ability to engage in other productive activities, like hunting.

Table 22 presents another model for explaining the variability in how much more forest people cleared from before and after the initiation of tourism profits. For every unit increase in income from palm/timber, the number of hectares cleared between 1997 and 1998 increased by 0.606. For every unit increase in wage, the number of hectares cleared between 1997 and 1998 decreased by 0.007.

Table 22 Regression: Change in Hectares Cleared and Income from Palm/timber

| Dependent Variable (Y): Change in Hectares Cleared for Annuals (1997-1998) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Independent Variable** | **Coefficient** | **Std. Error** | **t-stat** | **P(2 tail)** |
| Constant | 0.875 | 0.520 | 1.683 | 0.104 |
| X1: Income from palm/timber (1997) | 0.606 | 0.217 | 2.795 | 0.009 |
| X2: Wealth in stock (1997) | -0.646 | 0.213 | -3.038 | 0.005 |
| X3: Income from tourism wages | -0.007 | 0.132 | -0.052 | 0.959 |

N = 31 Households; Adjusted squared multiple R: 0.201; Standard error: 1.895 (F-ratio: 3.508; p-value: 0.029)

Again, this model shows similar trends revealed by the model in Table 21. Wage labor from tourism and cash income from tourism seem to have different impacts (i.e., the signs on the coefficients are different) on subsistence production. Though the figures are very small, and thus insignificant from a real-world perspective, they nevertheless
point to an incipient trend that may have more importance in the longer time period. Also, Table 22 and others show the importance of discerning differences in how people participate in tourism—what kinds of economic benefits they earn—before assuming any particular impacts on incentives for household production.

**Income from Tourism and Attitudes About Wildlife**

Throughout this chapter, I have explored two main questions: What causes participation in tourism? And what does participation in tourism cause? In analyzing the second question, I have focused mainly on how income and wages from tourism have had different kinds of impacts on people’s household subsistence activities, particularly swidden farming and hunting. I have said that most proponents of ecotourism have focused on the idea that economic benefits from tourism will provide incentives for local residents in tourism destinations to protect natural resources. My objective throughout the chapter has been to test that assumption. Though I have focused on the incentives ecotourism in Infierno has offered to change people’s economic behaviors, so far, I have not explored the possible impacts on values.

In analyzing the impact of tourism on values, I explored two things: 1) how people in Infierno were beginning to perceive themselves, their ethnic identity, and each other differently (I save that analysis for the next chapter), and 2) how people were beginning to assess the relative worth of some natural resources over others.

Within the context of sustainable development, some conservationists have said that the commercialization of natural resources, such as through tourism, may add value to natural resources, and thus provide greater incentives for people to protect the resources. By the same rationale, I expected that people who earn began to earn more
economic benefits from tourism would begin to perceive as somehow "more valuable" the wildlife species that were most attractive to tourists, even if such resources had no particular economic or spiritual value prior to the introduction of tourism.

In the case of Infierno, I expected that Harpy Eagles (*Harpia harpyja*) and Giant Otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) might gain new value in the eyes of people who were participating most in Posada Amazonas. For conservationists, both of these large predator species are considered endangered and critically in need of protection. Not by coincidence, both of these species are also highly coveted by tourists, and thus the continued presence of Harpy Eagles and Giant Otters in Infierno is central to the long-term success and viability of tourism in Posada Amazonas. Despite the importance of Harpy Eagles and Giant Otters among biologists, conservationists, and tourists, neither species held special economic significance to people in Infierno—at least not before tourism.

Though Ese Eja hunters in Infierno told me the Harpy eagles had always carried symbolic significance, the raptors generally were hunted only occasionally for their feathers. Relative to other bird species, however, Harpy eagles were not prized as prey. One hunter explained that their elusiveness in the high canopy made them an especially difficult to capture.

As for the Giant Otters, they were hunted years ago for their pelts, but since the international market for such pelts was outlawed, otters were rarely hunted (either for food or fur). In more recent years, otters have been economically important to people in Infierno, but rather from the perspective of *competition* for fish and fishing space.
To test for differences in attitudes about Harpy eagles and Giant otters as correlated with different levels of economic benefit from tourism, I questioned people about their perceptions of photographs of 26 different wildlife species commonly found in Infierno. These included a variety of prey and non-prey species for several different taxa. They also included several species that were known for their different levels of popularity among tourists. The full list of photographs included images of the following species (by English common name): Harpy eagle, Scarlet macaw, sunbittern, Hoatzin, capuchin monkey, Night monkey, Squirrel monkey, three-toed sloth, coati, tamandua, Giant otter, Red brocket deer, paca, capybara, collared peccary, tapir, ocelot, jaguar, caiman, catfish, Bushmaster snake, side-necked turtle, fruit-eating bat, tree frog, butterfly, and night beetle.

In each interview, I handed the pile of laminated pictures to people and asked them to select the five species they considered "most valuable." I did not define "valuable" but rather asked them to define the concept for themselves. Some people defined "valuable" species as ones they hunted; others defined "valuable" species by different criteria, such as beauty, spiritual or mythological significance, others defined "valuable" species as those most important to tourism.

After people had finished choosing, I asked them to sort through the same pile of pictures and select the five species "most valuable" to tourists. I expected to find that people who participated most in Posada Amazonas would have matching piles: that is, the same species "valuable" to them personally would be the species most "valuable" to tourists.
Table 23 presents results of the tests for the two species most publicized by the Ke’eway Association for their attractions at Posada Amazonas, Harpy eagles and Giant otters. The Table indicates that people earning a relatively high percentage of their income from tourism identified Giant otters and Harpy eagles as “valuable,” whereas people who earned a relatively high percentage of their income from agriculture (rather than from tourism) did not identify Harpy eagles and Giant otters as “valuable.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean % Income from Tourism</th>
<th>t-stat (p-value)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean % Income from Agriculture</th>
<th>t-stat (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Giant Otters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not identify as “Valuable”</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>-3.24 (0.003)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>2.11 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified as “Valuable”</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harpy Eagles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not identify as “Valuable”</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-2.62 (0.011)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2.39 (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified as “valuable”</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This relatively simple analysis from early in the project seems to suggest that economic benefits from tourism may be connected with new and positive valuations of natural resources, particularly those resources most sought after by tourists. If attitudes ultimately affect people’s decisions about subsistence practices, ecotourism may, in fact, be delivering on the economic promise the conservation community has anticipated.
Conclusions from Economic Analysis

One goal of the research was to reveal the effects of wage labor and cash at Posada Amazonas on people’s use of natural resources. The hope offered by the ecotourism literature is that economic benefits from tourism will give local people incentives to protect wildlife and other natural resources for tourism. I expected that the main economic benefits from tourism—wage labor and new cash income—would have ambiguous impacts. I hypothesized that wage labor would give people incentives to divert time and labor away from farming and forest extraction, and that new cash from tourism would offer people the means to intensify the rate at which they farm and extract resources.

In this chapter, I have combined quantitative data with ethnographic information to argue that the first half of the hypothesis is true. As people are beginning to work at Posada Amazonas, the value of their time is rising, and they are starting to invest less time in hunting and clearing forest for annual crops. In general, earning an income from tourism seems to conflict with earning a living from more traditional subsistence activities. Earning income from tourism may also be linked with new and positive valuations of certain wildlife species that are especially attractive to tourists.

Yet, the larger equation between economic benefits from tourism and less pressure on game species and forests is not so clear, at least not in this early stage of the project. In particular, the second part of the hypothesis remains untested. The project is too premature to show that community members are using their new income from Posada Amazonas to intensify the rate at which they are farming and extracting resources.
Though some people have talked about plans to buy chain saws, motorboats, and other implements that would allow them to increase their productive rates, and people who work in tourism are spending more per month than are those who do not, it is too early to track how people are investing their new income in farm and forest production.

Though the statistics are too weak to stand alone, what is interesting here is that all of the data—qualitative, quantitative, descriptive, and analytical—seem to be pointing in the same direction, indicating that the ways in which people participate in tourism are important for understanding their incentives to interact with nature in particular ways.
I waited as she closed her notebook and zippered the pencil into its plastic carrying case. Her class was over, and we were on our way to “la banda” (the other side of the river). I had arranged a meeting with her parents for three o’clock that afternoon, and she had agreed to paddle me there in her small dugout canoe. As we descended the steep bank, flip-flops and boots negotiating the switchbacks, she turned to me, “What is Ese Eja?”

“Well,” I began, a bit surprised, “you already know that, don’t you? The Ese Eja are...” Then, not sure how to continue, I turned the question back: “What does Ese Eja mean to you?”

Introduction

As the source of encounters between people of different cultural settings, tourism often triggers the creation of new social values as well as economic changes. Tourism provides the context for locals and tourists (hosts and guests) to gaze at each other, and to reflect on themselves through the eyes of others. Throughout the research, I have imagined windows and mirrors as metaphors for the points of contact between hosts and guests: each depends on the other to view alternative ways of being, as well as to cast back impressions of how the other "should be," based on expectations and stereotypes. In the wake of such gazing and reflecting, people on both sides of the encounter are likely to walk away affected, their values altered.
For these reasons, I have conceptualized tourism as a special kind of market integration. In Chapter One, I said that interactions between hosts and guests in tourism involve more than the simple exchange of money for goods or services. They also involve expectations, stereotypes, and expressions of ethnic identity and culture—these become the currencies and commodities that are exchanged between buyers and sellers, hosts and guests, in tourism. The inter-subjective perceptions of what’s going on between hosts and guests (i.e., what we think they’re thinking, and what they think we’re thinking), and how both sides are affected by the encounters, are not easily captured by economic analyses alone.

This chapter will be qualitatively different from the previous. Though here I continue to focus on the impacts of tourism in Infierno, I will focus not on the economic or material changes in peoples lives, but rather on their feelings of cultural identity, and in particular what they perceive the tourists want to see in terms of ethnicity and tradition. I will also interpret how relations between people of different ethnic groups in Infierno have changed since Posada Amazonas was created.

Exploring Ethnicity in Infierno

The questions concerning identity and ethnic relations and how they might be altered in the context of tourism moved to the forefront of the research even before the lodge, Posada Amazonas, came under construction. Although I had no explicit interest in ethnic identity before visiting Infierno, I could do little to avoid it in the subsequent years of field work. Conducting any kind of social inquiry there, and ignoring ethnicity could be nothing short of negligent.
Concerns over who belongs in what group, what people think of each other, and how they get along are at the core of almost every casual conversation and formal meeting in Infierno. Of the 65 men and women who responded to my question, “What is the worst problem in Infierno today?” 16% identified “conflicts between ethnic groups,” and another 26% pointed to the “lack of organization and willingness to work together” as the worst problem. In fact, concerns over ethnic conflict and lack of organization topped other serious problems, such as “lack of economic opportunities,” “lack of potable water,” and “lack of quality education.” Even among people I talked to outside the community, the fact that Infierno is a *mixed* community often came up as the first distinguishing characteristic.¹

Aside from the fact that everyone was talking about ethnicity, two things compelled me to learn more about people’s notions of identity, and how they might change in the context of tourism. For one, I discovered even before visiting the community that most people who know Infierno describe it as rife with conflict over ethnic differences between the Ese Eja, the ribereños, and the mestizos. A catchy if predictable comment was, “Infierno lives up to its name.” Others with experience in the community told me it was a “hornet’s nest.” Especially when the highly controversial joint venture with Rainforest Expeditions was proposed, Infierno was characterized as a war zone. I was literally cautioned about doing research there.

Based on all that I had heard and read, I expected to find, or more precisely *see*, conflict and ethnic difference in Infierno. I imagined clearly distinguishable camps—the

¹ These interviews occurred before the official plans for the split between the Ese Eja and the mestizos, a development I will discuss later in the chapter.
Ese Eja looking and acting different on one side, and the mestizos and ribereños on the other. Yet, when I arrived to Infierno, I found it difficult to detect much of any conflict or, for that matter, see major differences between the groups. With time, I learned that they do maintain a strong subjective sense of identity and affiliation. Few community members commonly make the distinction between Andean (or recent migrants) and ribereños (or long-term residents of tribal descent), but they do tend to talk about “los mestizos y los nativos,” or alternatively, “los mestizos y los paisanos.” The main distinction of importance seems to be between the Ese Eja and the non-Ese Eja. Though people were not fist-fighting or shouting (my expectations of “conflict”), the differences were felt, and also deeply embedded in people’s memories, which had accumulated over more than two decades of sharing the same territory.

A second issue that triggered my interest in ethnic identity was the fact most people identified Infierno as having lost its indigenous identity. Invariably, Infierno was characterized as the most “Westernized,” “modern,” “acculturated,” or simply “changed” of the native communities in Madre de Dios. Indeed, Infierno is just thirty minutes by road from the urban center of Puerto Maldonado, and fully half the community is comprised of mestizo families who have been living there for several decades.

Even within the community, the Ese Eja frequently identify themselves as different from the nativos of other communities in the region. With a combination of shame and wonder, they often remark that the Ese Eja of Sonene (another Ese Eja community in Madre de Dios) still keep their traditional ways. They live differently, (“only pure Ese Eja among them”); they do things differently (“they still hunt only with bows and arrows”); and they talk differently (“even the children speak the language
fluently”). A 67-year-old ribereño woman who had raised eight children in Infierno commented, “Before the natives spoke their own language, but now their children do not want to speak it.” Also noting the fading of tradition in Infierno, a 36 year-old-man who had been born in the region but was not Ese Eja made the following observation:

“Now they [the Ese Eja] have their radios, they listen to the news, they have their watches, and nice shoes. The real ones, the old ones who died, they were Ese Eja. They did not know about money, they spoke their language, they did not know anything. The Ese Eja in Sonene and in Palma Real—they are the real ones.”

It was common to hear that the natives in Infierno had lost their authenticity, or that they were somehow not “real.” Even the Ese Eja themselves seemed to believe it. Yet, when the community signed the contract with Rainforest Expeditions, many onlookers outside of the community were quick to protest, arguing that the influx of tourists to Infierno would destroy the Infierno’s ethnic identity. Here was an irony: on the one hand, the natives of Infierno were perceived as having little identity left to lose, but on the other hand, something about their identity was still worth saving from the Westernizing influence of tourism.

In the months that followed, I began to investigate further what it meant to be Ese Eja or mestizo. What were the perceived and real ethnic differences? In open-ended interviews, I asked community members to describe, if they could, what belonging in each group signified, what each perceived of the other, and what they thought were certain advantages or disadvantages of belonging to either group.

At first, I was concerned about the validity of my questions. I thought they might be too abstract and/or too polemical. Infierno was already a community known for conflict, and I certainly did not want my questions to incite more angry emotions. But people surprised me. Nearly everyone was extremely quick to answer, and they seemed
not at all concerned that what they said might insult someone or cause problems. The impression people gave me was that talking about ethnic differences, at least in private, was not at all unusual. No one needed to think very hard or very long to be able to explain to me the differences between an Ese Eja and a mestizo.

Many men and women differentiated the groups by explaining the different kinds of work and work ethics between the Ese Eja and mestizos. A 36-year old man who had migrated to Infierno from the region of Cusco said,

“The Ese Eja are the same as the mestizos, but their work is different. The Ese Eja like meat and hunting. The mestizos like agriculture more.” The Ese Eja do not work much in the chacra--only in pieces, but not all year. The Ese Eja are conformists, they stay with what they have. We [the mestizos] are thinking about old age, about being prepared for the future. The Ese Eja do not think about old age . . . for example, they do not have fruit trees or cattle.”

Similarly, another man of the same age who had been born in Infierno and who was Ese Eja, but only on his father’s side, said,

“The mentality of the native is to work for the day. They think only about hunting to eat today, and not to invest the money for the future. For a long time, they have had this mentality. The mestizos are thinking about having more, they have their radios, they have money so that they are not missing anything in the home. They put more into the chacra.”

Implicit in these distinctions between the farming and foraging lifestyles is the idea that farming is true work, and foraging is not, and that farming implies that a person is concerned for the future, whereas foraging is a day-to-day existence. As a 38-year-old Ese Eja woman who had married a ribereño from the region explained:

“The Ese Eja live from fishing, they walk in the forest. The mestizos do too, but not much—they worry more about working.”
Others pointed to physical traits to characterize the ethnic differences in Infierno. A 30-year old ribereño man described the Ese Eja as noticeably different,

"in the face, in the hair, in the language. They do not talk like we do, they have another class of words."

And, a 63-year-old man who was a founding member of Infierno and had originally migrated from Cusco said about the Ese Eja:

"Their noses are turned, and their faces are different."

A third point of difference many people described was that of perceived intelligence. Generally, people said the mestizos were smarter, in part, because they had a better command of the language. As a 37-year old Ese Eja man said,

"The mestizos participate more; the paisanos (Ese Eja) are more humble than the mestizos. The mestizos have more knowledge."

A mestizo of the same age who had been born in Infierno explained,

"The natives are ashamed to speak their own language."

As I recorded these comments and others, I was struck by the level of consensus among people, even across categories of gender, age, and ethnicity. I seemed to be hearing the same things, regardless of who was doing the telling; that is, the mestizos and the Ese Eja, the men and the women, the young adults and the elders had very similar ideas about what it means to be Ese Eja or what it means to be mestizo. With so much agreement, I began to realize how well-entrenched the ethnic stereotypes in Infierno had become.

In general, people told me the Ese Eja do not plan ahead for the future, and instead, they worry only about meeting today’s needs; they do not farm, but they do hunt; and, they are knowledgeable about the forest. The consensus about the mestizos was that they are savvier in many ways, especially in terms of language, and, because they do
speak well, they dominate in meetings. Also, the mestizos were described as very ambitious, thinking only about themselves, and not about the community as a whole.

Not surprisingly, I found evidence to counter most of the stereotypes. Though people told me the Ese Eja had problems with language, I watched several Ese Eja men of different ages speaking Spanish fluently and often speaking up in community meetings. Though people told me the Ese Eja did not engage in agriculture and/or the market economy, I interviewed many Ese Eja farmers who showed me their chacras and sold their farm produce on a regular basis to the river taxi heading to the market in Puerto Maldonado. Though the Ese Eja were described as the ones who hunt (and not the mestizos), I met several mestizo men who hunted regularly, and several Ese Eja men who asserted they rarely hunt at all.

On the other hand, some of the stereotypes did have some empirical basis. When I compared mean annual incomes for different populations, and the mean number of hectares cleared for agriculture, I learned that the Ese Eja households in general earn less income per year, and they cultivate an average of fewer hectares of annual crops (thus arguably matching the stereotype that the mestizos are “more ambitious”). Tables 24 and 25 below indicate the differences, both of which are statistically significant (at a p-value <0.05).
Table 24 Mean Annual Income: Ese Eja and Mestizo (or non-Ese Eja)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>Mean Annual Income</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Ese Eja</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9,810 soles</td>
<td>6,818 soles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(US$3,348)</td>
<td>(US$2,258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ese Eja</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6,681 soles</td>
<td>5,441 soles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(US$2,280)</td>
<td>(US$1,856)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[t\text{-stat} = 2.530 \quad \text{p-value} = 0.013\]

Table 25 Mean Number of Hectares Cleared: Ese Eja and Mestizo (or non-Ese Eja)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>Mean number of hectares cleared (1998)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Ese Eja</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.045</td>
<td>1.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ese Eja</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.280</td>
<td>0.868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[t\text{-stat} = 2.885; \quad \text{p-value} = 0.005\]

The facts and fictions regarding "how the Ese Eja are" or "how the mestizos are" have been passed on through at least two generations in Infierno, and as the alacrity with which people responded to my questions, and the consensus among them attests, they have generated widely held stereotypes. Like all stereotypes, the ideas do have some foundation of truth, and certainly twenty years ago, the differences between the different groups in Infierno must have been much more marked. Whether or not the stereotypes remain empirically true today in Infierno has done little to diminish their hold on people’s

\[\text{2 Included in these two tables are only households in which the male and female heads were both either Ese Eja or non Ese Eja.}\]
imaginations and prejudices. One man told me, “like oil and water, the mestizos and Ese Eja will never mix.”

As an outsider, I could not easily see or detect the differences between the Ese Eja and the mestizos, but I quickly learned how deeply felt they were by everyone in Infierno. This led me to perceive ethnicity as something more than genetic, more than physiognomic, more than linguistic, but rather as something highly subjective, and thus changeable.

Though ethnic differences were a source of great concern to people in Infierno, I began to wonder if they would matter to tourists too. Would tourists have certain expectations about the people they were meeting on their visits? Did they have perceptions about who was “real” and who was “not real” in ways that matched the ideas of people in Infierno? Would tourists be disappointed to learn that not everyone involved in Posada Amazonas was an Ese Eja native? I suspected that if I found this to be the case, then tourists’ expectations would ultimately affect how people characterized themselves ethnically in Infierno. The highly subjective aspect of ethnicity would respond to tourism, and specifically, people in Infierno would begin to act, perform, and embellish themselves in ways that matched tourists’ expectations of ethnicity.

To explore these ideas early in the research, before the lodge was built, I distributed questionnaires to tourists Rainforest Expeditions’ other lodge upriver from the future Posada Amazonas, the Tambopata Research Center. In the questionnaires, I described the future project and asked tourists to rank how important it would be to know that a native Ese Eja versus a local mestizo was performing different tasks in the lodge. The scale the on questionnaire was from one to five, highest indicating that it “mattered a
lot that the person performing the job was Ese Eja” and the lowest indicating that “it did not matter at all.” Table 26 shows the results of the surveys.

For positions such as housekeeper and cook, most tourists said they did not care whether or not the person performing the job was an Ese Eja. For positions such as guide or artisan, most tourists said they did care if the person was an Ese Eja. These latter positions are more strongly dependent on knowledge of local culture. The notion of authenticity in these positions is more important to tourists than it was in other positions. The important but unwritten implication of these scores is the idea that authenticity and culture are associated with the Ese Eja (and perhaps not with the mestizos).

Table 26: Tourists’ Responses to Importance of Ese Eja vs. Mestizo Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of Participating in Tourism Project</th>
<th>Mean score on 5-point Likert-like scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=not important that the person be Ese Eja; 5=very important that the person be Ese Eja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>1.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder of lodge</td>
<td>2.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier of food</td>
<td>2.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat driver</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>3.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide</td>
<td>3.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural performer</td>
<td>3.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to talking with the members of the community and the tourists about their perceptions of ethnicity in Infierno, I also examined closely the marketing material produced by the Ke’eway Association. I found that the territory on which Posada Amazonas stood was newly called the “Ese Eja Indian Community” or the “Ese Eja Native Community” in the brochures and websites. While it is clear that the “Native
Community of *Infierno*” is an unappealing name for a lodge (few tourists would jump at the opportunity to spend their vacation in a place called “Hell”), I think the marketing material is notable for more than the mere *omission* of a word. Rather, the insertion of the extra word, “Ese Eja,” is of particular interest.

To a large extent, the joint owners of Posada Amazonas have downplayed the cultural aspects of the project relative to the wildlife and natural history. In the stakeholder analysis of the first year, the owners of Rainforest Expeditions explained:

“We do not intend for the project to use the community or the people themselves as the focus of attraction for tourists. Rather, we want to work with the community to develop the natural resources they have as a tourist attraction. We hope to capitalize on their natural resources more than on their cultural resources.”

This statement is supported by some of the marketing materials. One magazine advertisement for Posada Amazonas, in particular, is illustrative. It contained color photographs of macaws, capuchin monkeys, Giant otters, and a Harpy eagle with a caption that read: “*Come meet some of our most frequent visitors.*” The small gallery of pictures could have included an image of an Ese Eja man holding a bow and arrow, but it did not. Below the pictures, the lines continue: “*In Posada Amazonas, you will find the perfect balance between wildlife and the richest tropical forests in America in a comfortable, secure, and authentic lodge . . .*” Though the word “authentic” is used here, there is no insinuation that “authentic” necessarily implies “Ese Eja.”

It is true that the Native Community of Infierno is home to many species of wildlife that are attractive to tourists, including Giant otters, three species of large macaws, camera-friendly dusky titi monkeys, the occasional Harpy eagle, and in rare cases, even white-lipped peccaries and jaguars (one in 1999, and one, lounging 30 meters up in tree, in February 2000). Yet what distinguishes Posada Amazonas from other
lodges in Tambopata is the fact that it is locally owned. This participatory feature alone would be enough to attract some tourists, particularly those who are socially conscious and hope that their dollars are somehow contributing to local livelihoods. But "local" can be made even more appealing to tourists by characterizing the local as not just local, but indigenous. Because of the popular perception that indigenous peoples live in harmony with nature, native communities are an easier sell to ecotourists than are colonist communities.

Perhaps for these reasons, some of the marketing materials have explicitly focused on the fact that Posada Amazonas is co-managed by native, Ese Eja (not mestizo) members of Infierno. The website information, for example, includes the following:

“Our lodge staff not only sets the regional standard for quality service but is also made up of a majority of Ese Eja community members, providing valuable income from tourism to their families. . . . There are many opportunities for cultural interaction with the Ese Eja: guided activities include ethnobotanical walks, visits to small scale farms, and other experiences we are developing in association with our native partners . . .” (italics mine).

Though more than half of the regular staff at Posada Amazonas are not Ese Eja, they are omitted from the information presented to tourists.

From my interviews and conversations with community members, tourists, and Rainforest Expeditions, I began to discern a widespread perception that "culture" or "ethnicity" was the exclusive domain of the Ese Eja. The ribereños, and especially the Andean migrants in Infierno, were somehow devoid of culture, at least of the kind that would be marketable for tourism. I began to suspect that tourism would create incentives to play up certain Ese Eja characteristics; and I became interested in how Ese Eja culture and ethnicity might be expressed in the context of tourism. The specific questions I had
were: Who would be considered Ese Eja? Would some people acquire privilege over others because of their ethnicity? Would mestizos gain incentives to act Ese Eja? How would tourism affect the ethnic tensions already prevalent in Infierno?

**Tourism and a New Consciousness of Identity**

*The high school students from California squinted in the late morning sun as they watched the performance from their front-row seats on the porch. Quechuan music streamed from the small boom box while the young boys and girls from Infierno danced, their palm skirts rustling in unison. Like small warriors, the boys lifted half-sized bows and arrows above their heads, and the girls danced with squash gourds in their hands, drawing small arcs from left to right. In their hair, each child wore the bright orange tail feather of a scarlet macaw. The teacher clapped enthusiastically as she called out the steps. The performance was a thanks for the visitors who had brought a telescope and other new supplies for Infierno’s primary school.*

*Standing among the parents at the base of the porch, Don Rolando, an elder Ese Eja man, watched for a few moments, and then turned to walk away, his head shaking: “That is not anything Ese Eja.”*

*... Later that evening, the students gathered to talk about their visit to the community. A young woman raised her hand, “I was a little uncomfortable looking down at the kids. I guess it made me feel too important.”*

*“Yeah,” someone added, “it seemed like they were a little uncomfortable too. I wondered if they were just acting for us, I mean, in a way that they thought we wanted to them be.”*
“I think it was nice they danced for us,” offered one of the parents, sitting in the back. “They obviously put a lot of preparation into it.”

“True,” conceded a student beside me, “But what I liked best was playing soccer with everybody afterward. That felt more real.”

Later in this chapter, I will provide some background to this story of the children dancing as natives and, as the student from California suggested, acting in a way they thought their guests might want. In the latter story, I will illustrate how people in Infierno—parents of the children who danced—are beginning to feel concerned that tourists will want them to look and act in particular “native” ways.

For now, I turn to a theory-based discussion of how expectations from tourists can prompt changes in how locals perceive and value their ethnic traditions. This section will lead me to the punchline of this chapter, which is that values about ethnicity in Infierno have already changed so much in the context of tourism that the Ese Eja and the mestizos, who have been sharing the same territory for more than twenty years, have begun a process of splitting from each other to form two separate communities. This recent (as of 1999) development has not been caused by tourism alone, but it has accelerated significantly since tourism.

The increased sensitivity to ethnic heritage and the need to define who’s who is linked to the economic changes I described in the last chapter. Because people in Infierno are competing for material gains from tourism, they are also vying for who is most worthy of such benefits. More than the promise of economic gain, tourism has also held a mirror to people, allowing for a resurgence of ethnic pride and a revalidation of tradition that, over twenty-five years of living with Andean and ribereño populations, has
been repressed. Many community members in Infierno believe tourists want to see real natives; and so now they are reconsidering what that means: Who is authentic, and who is not? Who has culture, and who does not?

As I mentioned earlier, many observers of the project in Infierno feared that tourism would cause people to lose their ethnic identity as they adopted lifestyles and values of outsiders. When the members of the community signed the contract with Rainforest Expeditions, a network of outsiders, especially anthropologists and development specialists in the non-profit sector, were highly vocal in their opposition. They argued that the influx of tourists to Infierno would erode the indigenous identity of the Ese Eja (see Chapter 3).

At least so far, tourism in Infierno seems to be having the opposite effect on cultural identity. In the short time since the introduction of tourism, people in Infierno have gained a new appreciation for their ethnic heritage, and this has been coupled by an increase in tension between peoples of different ethnic descent. Though it is true that encounters with tourists in many places have influenced locals to dismiss their own values and traditions in favor of others', tourism in Infierno seems to be having the reverse effect. Men and women are playing up their ethnicity, and they are doing so in a way that they openly anticipate will be perceived by visitors as somehow authentic.

This is a strange turn of events. For years, the Ese Eja have been told that their beliefs and practices are antiquated and backward. They have been made to feel embarrassed, foolish, or ashamed to speak their own language, live by their most traditional practices, or simply look and behave in ways that are distinctly Ese Eja (see Alexiades and Didier 1996; Chavarría and García 1993). Now, with tourism, many of the
Ese Eja in Infierno are considering the possibility that a return to the past may be the best path to a prosperous future.

As the Ese Eja are gaining a newfound sense of pride and entitlement, the implication has been a re-drawing of ethnic lines between those who are truly native and those who are not. Though the Ese Eja and their non-indigenous neighbors have been living together for more than two decades, and although they agreed to build and manage the ecotourism lodge together, now they are having new debates about who has a right to what resources, and more pointedly, who is most deserving of the new benefits from tourism.

**The Connection between Tourism and Ethnic Identity**

Infierno is not the first place in the world where tourism has prompted a change in ethnic identity, and, of course, I am not the first anthropologist to be considering how ethnicity and tourism might be linked. In fact, many of the major questions that have concerned cultural anthropologists, particularly those related to ethnic identity, tradition, and culture change, have appeared in the study of tourism. Using the lens of tourism, anthropologists have asked: How is ethnicity represented and how is it perceived (Bruner 1987, 1995; Núñez 1989; Urry 1990)? How are ethnic traditions changed or reinvented over time (Bendix 1989; Leong 1989), and what distinguishes genuine culture from spurious (Boorstin 1961, 1964)? In what ways can ethnic identity be constructed and manipulated (Evans-Pritchard 1989; Van den Berghe 1994)? How do values about culture and ethnicity change once they are marketed for consumption by tourists (Cohen 1988; Greenwood 1977, 1989)?
Intercultural contact and the changes that result from it, or “acculturation,” has been an especially pervasive theme in the study of tourism (Nash 1996). An early example came from Nuñez (1963) who described tourism as a “laboratory situation” for testing how acculturation occurs when urban tourists representing “donor” cultures interact with host populations in “recipient” cultures (p. 347). Though few anthropologists today would use the term “acculturation” (mainly because it connotes a narrow and unilineal view of change between old and new, traditional and modern), many anthropologists have expressed concern over the loss of values from tourism (e.g., Chicchón 1995, Erisman 1989; McLaren 1999; Nuñez 1989; Rossel 1988; Seiler-Baldinger 1988). The concept behind the term is still very present in public and academic discourses relating to tourism in indigenous societies. Acculturation is what many fear will happen to people with the intrusion of tourists, consumerism, and the commodification of culture.

Tourism is seen as driving culture change in a couple of ways. One is through the introduction of outsiders and commodities. Erisman (1989) has argued that the massive influx of foreign goods, people, and ideas to rural host destinations has a negative impact, which, ultimately, “erodes people’s self-esteem” (p. 350). Tourism, in this view, leads to “cultural dependency” in which local people gain economic benefits, but only as they are catering to the needs of outsiders. Loss of identity occurs in this scenario as the local economy improves, and hosts begin to act and think like tourists, whom they perceive as superior in every way.3

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3 In other studies as well, commodities have been seen as an especially corruptive force among indigenous peoples. Reed (1995) has noted that commodities are perceived as pulling people “deeper into the dark vortex of commercial activities and spewing them out on the other side of
A second way tourism is seen as affecting local identity is through the conveyance of expectations. According to this view, tourists seek authentic experiences in their travels and thus place expectations on locals to look and behave in ways that are authentically indigenous or ethnic. The problem is that authenticity is a subjective concept, and tourists often define for themselves what is authentic, relying on popular stereotypes as points of reference rather than on historical or ethnographic facts (Adams 1984; Crick 1989). Boorstin (1961) has described encounters between tourists and locals as "pseudo-events" that are based on what tourists choose to see rather than on what is really there. What tourists choose to see is, in turn, strongly influenced by the marketing efforts of tour operators (Silver 1993) and the popular media (Urry 1990). In an analysis of travel brochures, Rossel (1988) found "exaggerations, misleading statements, and lies" that provided a certain way of understanding the reality, and that offered the "tourist view" (p. 5). Indeed, Adams (1984) has argued that brochures and travel agents essentially provide tourists with a first glimpse of the locals through "prepackaged ethnic stereotypes," which later will be either reified or dismantled during the tourists' journeys (p. 470).

In theory, tourists' stereotypes are transmitted to locals through what Urry (1990) has called "the tourist gaze." The idea is that tourists wield power through the way they look at locals and expect them to appear and behave. In turn, locals acquiesce to the gaze by mirroring back images they hope will please tourists. The long-term implication is that locals will maintain, or at least, act out, traditions they are sure will satisfy and attract more tourists. Indeed, locals may consciously try to match visitors' expectations of what


the ethnic boundary into the harsh light of national societies and the international economy” (p.137).
is authentic, even if the results seem contrived or fake. Evans-Pritchard (1989) wrote of a Native American woman who felt she had to "look 'Indian' in order to be accepted as authentic by the tourists on whose dollars she depends" (p. 97). Cohen (1979) described locals who "play the natives" to live up to the tourists’ image (p. 18).

This “playing up” is not in itself a negative trend. If the tourist gaze does indeed have power to transform the identity of the people gazed upon, then, some scholars argue, tourism has as much potential to revive old values as it does to destroy them. Smith (1982), for example, has found that tourism may “serve to reinforce ethnic identity” (p. 26). Also, Mansperger (1995) has suggested that tourism “can help native people maintain their identity” (p. 92). According to Cohen (1988), tourism can become “a vehicle of self-representation” (p. 383), and therefore people may choose to re-invent themselves through tourism, modifying how they are seen and perceived, especially in efforts to suit the interests of themselves or of the people gazing back at them. In this vein, Van den Berghe (1994) has suggested that tourism can lead to "a renaissance of native cultures or the recreation of ethnicity” (p. 17). 4

One can only talk about “playing up” ethnicity if ethnicity is defined as something changeable and subject to manipulation. But not everyone defines ethnicity in this way.

4 Two especially interesting studies have exemplified how locals change to please tourists. In a study of tourism’s influence in southern Austria, Gamper (1981) found that people changed even their clothes for tourism. In normal routines, locals were wearing outfits typical of any other place in Europe, but during the tourist season, people became conscious of the need to don traditional costumes. Yet even the costumes were changed for tourists: though originally brown, black, and white, a bright red vest was added later because, as one informant explained, “Red looks better on Kodachrome.” (p. 439). In another study, Albers and James (19843) examined 600 postcard images of Native Americans issued between 1900 and 1970. They discovered that the images changed with the growth of tourism in the American West, and that representations of Indians were increasingly tailored to match tourists’ expectations. The most striking change was the disappearance of images that showed Indians in their normal surroundings and everyday dress. Increasingly, the pictures conformed to a stereotypic image, “derived from the equestrian, buffalo-hunting, and tipi-dwelling Indians of the nineteenth century” (p. 136). See Mamiya (1992) for a similar study.
For some scholars, ethnicity is an objective and observable phenomenon, defined by patterns of behavior and expression; for others, ethnicity is subjective, comprised of values, beliefs, and ways of perceiving the world that are not necessarily visible to outsiders.

In the first approach, ethnicity is taken as a biological product of inheritance, passed down through blood and genes. In this view, what joins people of the same “ethnos” or biological groups is “race” and “the characteristics of the body, that most palpable element of one’s persona” (Peterson et al. 1980:5). People belonging to the same ethnic group necessarily share a common descent, but they also share a language and a relatively fixed set of social customs, including religious practices, marriage rules, etc. (Naroll 1964; Nash 1989). Ethnic identity, according to this paradigm, is something children acquire early in life as part of their normal development and socialization; it is not something they reconstruct or invent later in life.

When we focus solely on the genetic characteristics of ethnicity, then it becomes something people either have it or they do not. Susan Paulson (1997) has observed that ethnicity is often treated simplistically as qualities of human bodies. Similarly, Jean Jackson (1995) has argued that ethnic groups are typically described as possessing culture, just as animal species have fur or claws—a person “‘has’ culture, an entity that can be lost, enriched, or stolen” (p. 16). The maintenance or loss of such traits is believed to be strongly linked to the respective survival or assimilation of an ethnic group. Les Field (1994) described ethnic traits as “the ‘essences’ of being Indian that function as Cartesian coordinates against which the degree of ‘Indianness’ of a group can
be determined” (p. 238). In sum, ethnicity in this view is fixed, and certain traits are logically and visibly connected to particular ethnic groups.

Many scholars have considered the socially constructed, versus the purely biological, side of ethnicity. Max Weber (1968) was one of the earliest proponents of the notion that ethnicity is subjective. He wrote, "We shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities . . . or because of memories . . . conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists (p. 389). This different focus implies a move away from talking about ethnic identity as highly fluid rather than fixed, subjective rather than objective, and extremely adaptive rather than merely born into; in this view, ethnicity is less something someone has, like blue eyes or brown skin, and more something someone does with varying levels of consciousness.

Lynn Stephens (1996) has argued that ethnicity is “a creative and improvisational process, fluid and ever-changing (p. 18). The persistence of ethnicity through time and space is more than the biological transmittal of genes; it is the product of consciously creating and recreating what it means to be Sioux, Welsh, or Ese Eja. Paulson (1997) has portrayed, for example, how the ethnic identity of a Bolivian woman can change in the course of just one day, depending on the task at hand. She writes, “Throughout the long day of cooking, serving, digging, harvesting and sorting potatoes, Faustina lives with her femaleness and her Mizqueness in the way she administers and performs each task . . . In the late afternoon, however, her identity shifts as she enters into transport negotiations with a mestizo trucker” (p. 1). This characterization of continuously changing ethnicity
contrasts with the notion that people are born into one, and only one, ethnic group that marks them throughout their lives.

The view that ethnicity is continuously recreated rather than innate and fixed has been called "instrumentalist." Instrumentalists say that ethnicity can serve a function in a person's life, or even in achieving the goals of a group. Fredrik Barth (1969, 1975, 1994) has argued that a key function of ethnicity is to maintain boundaries. In this view, people consciously construct *ethnic boundaries* in order to achieve particular goals. These boundaries can be subjective, ideological, symbolic, and not necessarily readily identified by outsiders—basically, the function of the boundaries is to keep insiders in and outsiders out.

In this thesis, I have combined the idea that ethnicity is subjective and changeable, with the theory that ethnic groups maintain boundaries in conscious ways. The logical extension of these two ideas is that people can shape and manipulate ethnicity to accommodate certain situations or to achieve particular goals. Similar to what I will explain is happening in Infierno, Jackson (1995) has argued that the Tukanoan Indians of Colombia have begun to retain their Indian identity because they increasingly feel the need to "demonstrate Indianness" in order to obtain benefits from both government and nongovernmental organizations. Similarly, Cohen (1981) has written that ethnicity is "the result of intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions of power . . . places of employment, taxation, funds for development, education, political position, etc." From these examples, the conscious expression of ethnicity has primarily to do with competition, politics, and economics. The implication is that ethnicity can be mobilized to achieve material gains.
A consequence of the view that ethnicity can be manipulated as a resource to gain something is that any expression of ethnicity can then be construed as fake ploys to achieve political or economic advantage. For example, contributors to James Clifton’s (1990) edited volume, The Invented Indian, have criticized some Native Americans, who the authors refer to as “counterfeits of the past,” for fabricating their Indianness to gain government favors (see Deloria, 1992 for a strong rebuttal).

Some researchers suggest that indigenous peoples have purposely mobilized a “noble savage” identity to attain rights to land and other resources. Sam Gill (1990), for example, asserts that indigenous peoples have consciously linked themselves to the symbolic icon of Mother Earth. He writes,

"Indians in recent decades have, through their appropriation of Mother Earth, attached to her the qualities that articulate distinctively ‘Indian’ in contrast and clearly superior to ‘white’ American attributes. Indians are of the earth; they care for and nurture Mother Earth, who in turn cares for and nurtures them” (p.142).

With similar reasoning, Redford and Stearman (1993) have stated that some indigenous peoples have “presented themselves uncritically as ‘natural conservationists’ . . . because they recognize the power of this concept in rallying support for their struggle for land rights” (p. 251). Evidence of this are the many times and places in which indigenous groups have argued that they are the appropriate caretakers of endangered areas (Kleymeyer 1994).5

5 It is true that if we alter our definition of ethnicity to include more and more of the subjective, invisible, and malleable traits, we make it increasingly difficult to distinguish the genuine from spurious, the authentic from the contrived. A body literature on “cultural fictions,” rooted in Anderson’s (1983) Imagined Communities, Hobsbawn and Ranger’s (1983) Invented Traditions, and Sollors’ (1984) Invented Ethnicity has touched upon these issues.
If we believe locals give in to the tourist gaze by projecting creatively tailored images of themselves to outsiders, then an examination of stereotypes can offer a preview of what’s to come from tourism. In other words, an understanding of outsiders’ and tourism industry stereotypes should illuminate how locals are prone to change in the context of tourism. In the case of Infierno, stereotypical views of Amazonian Indians, particularly ones that characterize their relationship with nature as harmonious, seems to have influenced how community members in Infierno are beginning to reshape their images for visitors.

In The Tourist, Dean MacCannell has argued that tourists are motivated to travel primarily because they thirst for authentic experiences (see also Harkin 1995; Redfoot 1984). This longing for authenticity is especially acute in modern societies where people feel alienated and in need of respite from the monotony of their lives. Therefore, tourists seek out places that offer “the pristine, the primitive, the natural, that which is as yet untouched by modernity” (Cohen 1988:374). In the popular travel literature, the Amazon has been portrayed as such an idyllic escape from the modern world. Travelers are promised the chance to catch a glimpse of a simpler past in what is yet a Garden of Eden. In these places, Dobkin de Rios (1994) has suggested, tourists are especially eager to find the “the exotic, erotic primitive or happy savage” (p. 6).

Tales of boat journeys down the Amazon have been especially evocative of this image. Whittell (1987) remembers "gliding gracefully through a pristine, primeval forest

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6 On the flip-side of Eden is a vision of the Amazon as a dangerous place. In the 1980s, numerous articles appeared in popular sports magazines, encouraging travelers to fear the Amazon even as they were enticed to explore it (see Blount 1987; Buckley 1987). In this “adventure travel” genre, authenticity was necessarily defined by danger.
that still harbors Indian tribes whose ways have changed little since the stone age" (p. 38).

An article called “Adrift on the Amazon” appeared in a popular women’s magazine describing a night in the rainforest as a return to the past:

"As the moon lit its exterior, the embers of a cooking fire made its interior glow in the softest, richest rose. A man was picking at a guitar. Hammocks swayed. A baby cried. There was a pot over the fire. We were drifting by mankind’s primordial home" (Hamilton 1987:66).

Ecotourists who are especially conservation-minded may want to see indigenous peoples because so often natives have been portrayed as ideal allies in efforts to protect rain forests and other threatened environments (Hecht 1989; Redford 1990; Schmink 1992). Darryl Posey (1988), for example, has argued, “The world is threatened not just with the loss of tropical ecosystems but with the loss of peoples who know how to use them, whose ideas and knowledge may be the richest of all tropical resources” (p. 90). In a book offering quotations from indigenous peoples around the world, Native Wisdom for White Minds, readers are reminded, "Native cultures have much to teach us. They know how to live in balance with themselves, with each other, with nature and with the earth” (Schaf 1995:9). Much of the marketing material produced in the ecotourism industry emphasizes these kinds of links between indigenous peoples and harmony with nature.

These are images that were created specifically for travel magazines and the tourist market. In many cases, tourists carry such images with them, like so much added baggage, and then consciously or not, they convey expectations for locals to match the stereotypes. Ultimately, the perceived quality of a tourist destination, based in part on
whether the tourists feel they saw what they came to see, is directly linked to locals’ abilities to match preconceived or prepackaged notions of the natives.

The Reflection of Tourists’ Views in Infierno

So far in this chapter, I have explained that tourists come with expectations of the authentic, and their perceptions of authenticity are defined largely by marketing materials (brochures, websites, etc.) produced by the tourism industry. An especially popular image among ecotourists to the Amazon is that of the noble savage, or native person who lives in harmony with the natural environment. In the case of Infierno, “authentic” has been defined by the ecotourism joint venture as “Ese Eja” or “native.” The question then becomes, so what? What is the effect of influencing tourists to believe that authenticity in Infierno is defined by the quality of being Ese Eja?

Graburn (1976) has written that tourists recognize ethnicity as “a small bundle of overt features.” These are features that get exaggerated by the market, and sometimes they feed back into the host community, changing locals’ sense of who they are, or who they think they should be, or at the very least, who they think outsiders think they should be.

Because Posada Amazonas is locally-managed tourism project, people in Infierno are not only the subjects of brochures, they are also active participants in determining what is being said and depicted about them. This became especially apparent to me one afternoon when I was showing a small stack of photographs to Diego, a young Ese Eja man who had been deeply involved in the tourism project from the beginning, and was now serving on the Ecotourism Committee. One of the photographs in the stack portrayed Gustavo, an Ese Eja man in his 40’s, dressed in a traditional tunic called a *cushma*, clutching a bow and arrow, and looking directly at the camera. Diego studied
the picture for a few moments, and then, holding it up for better perspective, declared, “This will be great for the brochure!”

I was immediately taken aback, for I had not once considered using the photograph for a brochure. Though I could see that it was a provocative image, it was one that Gustavo had requested I shoot for his own use, not for public consumption. Later, I thought about Diego’s comment, and how much it revealed, in so few words, his consciousness of public image, his awareness of tourists’ desire for the authentic, and his knowledge of the fact that Infierno had become a place to be seen, and in that way, consumed. I realized also that not everyone in Infierno perceived things in the same way Diego had, and perhaps that was precisely the point: Diego had been involved in tourism from the beginning, and his involvement had already somehow influenced his sense of self, and his desire to project the “right image” to tourists, one that would be perceived as ethnically authentic and adorned with the appropriate accoutrements of Ese Eja culture.

Diego may represent an extreme case of heightened awareness about tourists’ expectations of authenticity, but he is not alone. As Posada Amazonas has gained success, and as the community has received more attention from tourists, photographers, researchers, and other outsiders, people in Infierno have begun to talk more and more about reviving their culture, especially their Ese Eja culture. In the four years I watched tourism take hold in Infierno, and even though tourists were not visiting residential areas of the community, I noticed changes in how people began to discuss their ethnicity and the differences among them. To me, the changes revealed an increased consciousness of ethnic self and identity, and a greater concern for who was truly native, and what that
implied for how people should look, speak, act, and think, especially before the expectant
gazes of tourists.

The words of Rosa, a ribereño mother of five children with mixed ethnic
heritages, summed it up simply: “We cannot disappoint tourists who have come to see
Indians.” Another woman of Ese Eja origin added, “We’re living like any community,
and not like the native community that we are. Now we want everyone to know our
origins.”

Ethnic differences were already assumed, felt, and discussed on a normal basis
before tourism became a factor in Infierno. As I described in the beginning of this
chapter, people had no difficulty explaining for me the differences between the Ese Eja
and the mestizos. Yet, now that tourism has become more important to the livelihoods of
many families in Infierno, the concern over ethnic differences seems even more
pronounced. In particular, there is growing fear that one group, the Ese Eja, might be
(and some think, should be) especially favored by tourists. They seem to believe that it is
not enough to be Ese Eja in whatever form; but rather that a true Ese Eja should look a
certain way so as to match the tourists’ brochure, or the conservationists’ ideal of the
ecologically noble savage, or the anthropologists’ ethnographic studies, or some other
outside image that has been projected on them in recent years.

“Cultural Rescue” in Infierno

Since the mid-1980s, Infierno has been host to a project for promoting traditional
healing. Adopting its name from an ancestral Ese Eja healer, the "Centro Ñape" project
consists of a small complex of thatched buildings and a forest nursery with nearly one
hundred species of medicinal plants (Alexiades and Didier 1996). Shamans and healers
from spiritual traditions throughout the region have visited Centro Ñape over the years to
participate in workshops and ceremonies aimed at promoting the knowledge and use of natural remedies.

Initially, Centro Ñape was designed to improve health conditions in native communities throughout Madre de Dios by encouraging people to learn about and use locally available herbal remedies to treat everyday ailments. In recent years, the Center has become the locus of efforts to remember and revive Ese Eja traditions and practices. Activities have included an Ese Eja language workshop, special gatherings for Ese Eja only members of the community, and a project to collect photographs and recorded songs and stories from Ese Eja elders. A 1999 proposal written by the community-based managers of Centro Ñape outlined plans to link ecotourism with these efforts at "cultural rescue." Though Ese Eja leaders and elders have expressed concern about "selling out" to tourists or commodifying their culture, they nevertheless hope to finance their ongoing efforts at Centro Ñape by allowing tourists to visit their project and learn about Ese Eja culture and tradition.

The leaders of Centro Ñape, and of the cultural rescue project seem certain tourists want to see real natives, and that the Ese Eja are the most authentically so in Infierno, at least compared to the mestizos. One man described cultural rescue as important to live up to how the community had marketed themselves as the Ese Eja community. “We want to acknowledge the cultural differences between us,” he said, “In fact, that could be another kind of attraction.” He then suggested that they would need to dress appropriately, adding, “Though we won’t be wearing our traditional costumes everyday.”
The fact that the Ese Eja want to emphasize their indigenous identity is reflected even in the name of the proposed new facility at Centro Ñape: “Centro EtnoCultural Indigena Ese Eja,” which translates to “Ese Eja EthnoCultural Indigenous Center.” The name is so packed with words that connote authenticity, cultural heritage, and tradition; it seems to say “here is where culture can be found in Infierno.”

Even outside of Centro Ñape, and outside the circle of leaders promoting the idea of “cultural rescue,” I found three main indicators of renewed interest in Ese Eja cultural heritage, especially in the last year of the research. It seemed in general that widespread interest in Ese Eja tradition surged as the community itself became more involved in tourism. (Though it may also be that I was simply more attuned to “cultural rescue” latter in the research than I was in the beginning.)

One particularly noticeable trend in the third year of field work was an intensified concern to learn from the Ese Eja elders. It seemed that more and more people were speaking with urgency about the need to collect tape recordings and photographs. An Ese Eja elder who knew many of the traditional songs and stories of the group had died in 1997, and there was a sense that time was running out. In 1996, the young Ese Eja leaders of the cultural rescue project talked about the need to learn from the elders, but by 1998, many more men and women were saying the same things.

I remember one evening in particular when I was sitting with Gustavo, the Ese Eja man who had donned the cushma and asked to be photographed (latter, the image was the one that provoked Diego to comment that it would be “perfect for the brochure.”) As Gustavo and I talked, we watched his young nephews just meters from us playing Brazilian and American pop music on a boom box. Every ten minutes or so, they would
shine the dim light of a flashlight on the box, change the frequency, and readjust the volume. At one point, Gustavo lifted his chin in the direction of the boys and remarked that no but Don Julio remembers the old songs the Ese Eja. Silent for a few moments, he added, “No one remembers the dances either.”

On a different day, I had an opportunity to talk with Don Julio himself. I told him what Gustavo had said, and as we sat looking at the river, he lamented:

“That who were born here are not Ese Eja. They look like mestizos. They don’t speak the language, only Spanish. There are only a few of us who still speak. Little by little, we are finishing.”

Gustavo’s and Don Julio’s concerns about loss of Ese Eja memory would be repeated to me again and again in the last year of fieldwork. This was a difference from 1996—in that year, most people told me they could speak only a few words of Ese Eja, that they were not as fluent as their grandparents or neighbors. Just two years later, many of the people assured me they were strongly fluent.7

A second indicator of increased interest in reviving Ese Eja culture that corresponded with increased tourism in Infierno was the discussion of intellectual property. Though the Ese Eja leaders of the “cultural rescue” project said they do want tourists to visit the proposed “Centro EtnoCultural Indígena Ese Eja,” they are also apprehensive. In particular, they are wary of commercializing or exploiting their own cultural traditions for mere consumption by tourists. One leader of the project, an especially thoughtful Ese Eja man full of concern for his people, offered this insight:

“The tourism project should not collect knowledge of the Ese Eja. It would not be good for us because the lodge is part of Western society. They [the company and

7 I could attribute this to the several things: 1) they were always fluent, but ashamed to tell me, or did not know me well enough to tell me in the first year; 2) they were never fluent, but wanted to be so in 1998; 3) they were never fluent, but wanted me to think they were; 4) they were not fluent in 1996, but had become fluent by 1998. Any of these answers (except maybe the first) provides further evidence that concern for cultural rescue and pride in Ese Eja cultural heritage had increased in a matter of just a couple of years.
the tourists] would take our knowledge and then gain the most from it. We must be prepared to do cultural rescue for ourselves, collecting stories and songs for our own children.”

In 1997, two Ese Eja brothers were hired by filmmakers to assist with and appear in the documentary film, “Candamo,” which featured a few minutes of footage in Infierno. After the film had been completed and aired to a national audience, the brothers were criticized by several members of the community, for selling native culture without first gaining prior consent from the other Ese Eja members of the group.

The treatment of Ese Eja culture as intellectual property had existed in Infierno even before tourism began there, and these concerns about commodifying culture and who has a right to share cultural knowledge of the Ese Eja with any agents of the outside world were debated before any marketing brochures were created or any tourists came with their expectations of the noble savage. The grassroots indigenous federation in Puerto Maldonado, FENAMAD (Federación Nativa de Madre de Dios), and its national sponsor for indigenous rights were instrumental in introducing the concept of intellectual property to Infierno and to other native communities throughout Peru.

Yet, when Rainforest Expeditions and Infierno signed the joint venture contract in 1996, the leaders of FENAMAD and their supporters (mostly anthropologists and indigenous rights activists) emphasized even more the importance of protecting Ese Eja culture from the potential commodification and mass expropriation that might occur in the context of tourism. The advice of outside advisors and supporters of Ese Eja leaders in Infierno has continued to influence the ways in which people talk about “culture” as “property” and who has a right to its use and representation in the context of tourism.

A third trend, and this is perhaps the most significant indicator of renewed pride in Ese Eja culture, is the fact that even mestizos in Infierno have begun to identify
themselves as natives. Such a premium has become attached to Ese Eja identity in Infierno—in part, because of the marketing materials, in part because of what outside supporters (anthropologists and others) have said, in part because of what tourists were expressing in their expectations—that even people who had not a drop of Ese Eja blood, or who had never defined themselves as Ese Eja, had begun to characterize themselves as native.

This switch of identity was especially startling when the man who began calling himself native in 1998 was the same man who had highly derogatory words to say about the Ese Eja in 1997. In fact, everyone in his family had negative descriptions of the natives in comparison with the mestizos. One comment, from his father, for example, was “When the Ese Eja sell something, they money disappears quickly because they drink a lot. Sometimes then they have to steal.”

This man’s change of heart about the Ese Eja, and, ultimately, his change in self-identity occurred when he began working in a position at Posada Amazonas that gave him a tremendous amount of daily exposure to tourists. After discovering that tourists wanted to learn about his traditions as a native of the region, he found it advantageous to accommodate their perceptions of who he was. Indignant when I questioned his decision and motives, he said, “Well, I was born here, and so I’ve always considered myself a native.” Of course, his point was valid: it did not matter that he was not Ese Eja—he was nonetheless native. He knew enough about local flora and fauna, social history and mythology of the area to fill several hours of conversation with tourists (relying on the help of a translator). He was not void of culture, and it did not make sense for him to
dilute somehow the perceived authenticity of his being by revealing to tourists that he was not precisely "native" in the way that they might have thought he was.

Not only the people working at the lodge, but also some community members who rarely interacted with tourists were beginning to consider a change in their identity. At a meeting to plan for the future of development in Infierno, a leader of the "cultural rescue" project addressed the importance of incorporating mestizos in the project. He had sensed that there was growing resentment about the exclusiveness of the Ese Eja-only endeavor. Looking at the mestizos in the group, he said, "We want to involve everyone. Little by little, the Ese Eja culture can be adopted by everybody." At that, a mestizo in the group responded, "Yes, we can dance like Ese Eja, use the clothes, learn to speak the language." And another mestizo added, "Yes, I feel completely Ese Eja. We've been living as one family for 25 years now." These comments helped convince me not only of the subjective nature of ethnicity, but also of the possibility that people in Infierno were beginning to manipulate their own ethnic identities to take advantage of new opportunities for material benefit, privilege, and prestige in Infierno, particularly those that were being presented through tourism.

The three indicators of renewed (or new) pride in Ese Eja culture I have mentioned are 1) heightened concern to learn from the elders, particularly their language, stories, and songs, 2) interest in presenting various aspects of Ese Eja culture to tourists, coupled with debates over intellectual property rights, and who has a right to represent and gain from the sale, consumption, and distribution of Ese Eja cultural knowledge, 3) adoption of Ese Eja identity by non-Ese Eja members of the community.
In an earlier section of this chapter, I included a short vignette about the presentation of a dance to tourists. In that story, an elder Ese Eja man who was watching the dance commented with some frustration, “That is not anything Ese Eja.” The next vignette below, recorded in July 1999, provides background to that story, and should illustrate the newly conscious effort in Infierno to match the expectations of tourists:

One afternoon after classes had finished, and the children had gone home, the senior school teacher in Infierno met with the Ese Eja and mestizo members of the Family Parents Association. A big item on the agenda was to plan a performance for a special group of visitors (students from an international environmental education program). The parents started the meeting by talking about what costumes the children should wear—the idea was that they would be dancing for the visitors. Several parents suggested designs and materials, and their ideas seemed to emanate from some reservoir of perceptions about what the tourists might want to see. What kinds of palms, seeds, the shape? How should the boys’ costumes differ from the girls’?

Fifteen minutes into the discussion, the teacher pulled from her bag a cassette tape decorated with the photograph of an Indian man. “He may be from Pucallpa,” she contemplated aloud. And then holding up the picture, she reminded everyone of this important point: “They must also have their bows and arrows.”

At that point, Pablo, an Ese Eja man who had begun to sell bows and arrows to the tourists, murmured from the back, “But they have to be from this area, what the Ese Eja really use.”
The Ethnic Split

“The Ese Eja, we know the science of the natural world, of how to live. We have the legacy of our ancestors, the ones who know. The mestizos are in zero. If they know anything, it is because of us. We the natives know everything, all of the animals...because of the moon, the sun, we are never lost. We are timid, but our minds are always working.”

—Ese Eja man, 45 years old, Infierno, 1997

“The Ese Eja have the custom of living in tranquility. They only hunt and fish, and they harvest pona, huasai, aguaje, ungurahui, and hojas. They do not work in the chacra, and they do not work when it is hot. We the mestizos are dedicated to agriculture. I have been ever since my childhood, like my father. They say the mestizos have no voice, and no vote. I think we do have a voice and a vote. We are equal.”

—Quechua-speaking immigrant, 42 years old, Infierno, 1997

Though the playing up of ethnic tradition by the Ese Eja is a positive trend in that it has lead to a resurgence (or, for some, a first-ever feeling) of ethnic pride, in other ways, it has exacerbated old tensions in the community. The tourism project does not mark the first time ethnic conflict has arisen in Infierno. Nearly two decades ago, the mestizos and the Ese Eja discussed splitting over debates regarding who had rights to a loan from the Agrarian Bank. Notes from the community’s official archives also indicate that, just three years after the community had been officially titled, one of the community members asked the general assembly if the mestizos could separate from the Ese Eja. The notes describe a protracted discussion over whether a mestizo could serve on the governing council—in 1979 they decided that yes, a mestizo should be allowed to serve on the council; otherwise the mestizos would split from the community.

Though the conflicts are deeply rooted, tourism seems to be causing an accentuation of difference in the community. Neither side wants to stop working together
at Posada Amazonas nor in other community projects. Each side claims to be the victim, or the one most discriminated against. Both sides think the other is receiving preferential treatment in hiring for the lodge. One Ese Eja man told me that the mestizos should have no right to work in the lodge, that the lodge should belong only to the Ese Eja. When I asked about the mestizos who signed the contract and helped build the lodge (“Should they benefit as well?”), he said, “We can pay them for their time, but after that, they should be excluded from the project.” The mestizos, in turn, argue that they invested all the labor, and now the Ese Eja are being favored. As one woman argued, “The mestizos helped more in building the lodge, but now the Ese Eja are being hired.”

As a solution to these debates (and to earlier ones accumulated over twenty years), the Ese Eja have announced they want to separate from the mestizos, and move upriver to live as they please. They have decided that their children may attend school with mestizos as always, but in the evenings, they will return to the Ese Eja-only sector of community. They want to have settlers title their lands separately, and the few mestizos who are surrounded by Ese Eja will either be relocated or become islands.

The question of who will be included in the Ese Eja portion of the soon-to-be-divided community, and how they will decide, or even who will decide is unclear. Some leaders say they will follow the rule of patrilineal descent (i.e., only children of Ese Eja fathers will be considered truly Ese Eja). This accommodates many of the leaders who have parented children with non-Ese Eja women. Yet, even among the leaders, the rules are confusing: some people who are not Ese Eja by descent, will be entitled to join the Ese Eja enclave if they share similar beliefs and concerns about the community.
Conclusion

Anthropologists have argued that the gaze of tourists is influential in determining how hosts look, behave, and feel. The case of Infierno suggests that hosts can, and often do also play a role in determining what happens in host-guest interactions. Especially when making decisions about how to portray themselves, community members have expressed particular ideas about what the tourists want. Diego’s comment that the photograph of the Ese Eja man wearing a native cushman is “perfect for the brochure” reveals that people are thinking explicitly about image and performance. Also, the mestizo guide’s decision to call himself a native illustrates some people’s conscious attempts to match tourists’ expectations.

Over the course of just a few weeks in Infierno, and in different kinds of interactions with outsiders, I watched people demonstrate tremendous creativity in matching behaviors to visitors’ expectations. With a group of visiting scholars and potential donors for the continuation of the project, community members played up their role of proud lodge owners, content with the direction tourism was taking in their community (though, privately, they had concerns about who was participating and who was gaining). With visiting school children, they performed a dance, dressed in what they hoped would be perceived as a typical Amazonian Indians—this role to match the lesson plans of teachers. For a Native American woman who was visiting from the U.S. to share stories about cultural rescue among her people, the members of Infierno played up their own role as crusaders in rescuing their dying language and tradition. For guests who were visiting from another part of the Amazon, the community members apparently felt no need to change much of anything—the expectations from other Amazonians were
minimal, and therefore, there was not much to play up to, other than simply being themselves.

The fact that people in Infierno are shifting the outward manifestations of their identity does not imply that they have lost a sense of who they are ("really are"), or their ability to distinguish what is genuine from spurious. Especially in places where tourism is invited rather than imposed, as in Infierno, local residents can remain conscious of what is real and staged even as they manipulate their culture to attract more tourists.

Furthermore, the trend to play up or embellish one’s cultural identity is not the result of tourism alone. In an article called, “Cultural Authenticity,” Greenwood (1982) has suggested, "All viable cultures are in the process of 'making themselves up' all the time. In a general sense, all culture is 'staged authenticity'" (p. 27). I would contend that the members of Infierno have been “making themselves up” for many years, as least as long as mestizos and Ese Eja have been sharing the same territory and trying to reconcile the differences among them. They are now and perhaps always have been a community in transition. Anyone who spends enough time in Infierno certainly gets the sense that it is possible to see culture changing and being recreated on a daily basis. People seem always to be shifting their identity. I was reminded of this one day when tourists weren’t even around.

It was a Sunday, and the members of a ribereño community upriver were in Infierno, about to engage in a champion soccer match with Infierno’s team, Los Angeles de Infierno. One of the fans from the other team asked Felipe, a star player from Infierno, “What are you doing wasting your time with those natives of Infierno? I’ve responded without even a pause: “I was born, raised, and educated in Infierno. I’ve
always considered myself to be a native as well.” Later in the game, fans for the other team yelled out some derogatory comment about how poorly “the natives” play. In unison, a group of three women from Infierno’s side, two of whom were sisters of Felipe, called back indignantly, “We are not natives!”

It simply is not clear who is who in Infierno, and people are deciding this from moment to moment, situation to situation, depending on the audience and what’s at stake. What is clear is that tourism has prompted people to talk openly about the differences between them, the changes they are experiencing, and the appropriateness of ethnically defined rights and privileges. As an indirect and perhaps unintended result of tourism, a few fundamental questions concerning identity, culture and community have seeped into everyday debates and conversations in Infierno. These include the question of what culture is and who has it, how and why ethnic differences define people, whether ethnic diversity is a strength or a weakness, what traditions are meaningful and why, and how things have changed over the past twenty five years.

Rather than gossiping, pointing fingers, and harboring resentment, people are talking openly about these issues and thinking critically about how best to resolve them for the benefit of everyone. I perceive the new transparency about issues of ethnic conflict as one result of tourism. Specifically, tourism has brought to light issues that had been in the shadows of Ese Eja-mestizo interactions since the founding of the community. Though for years people had held strongly to their individual convictions about what it means to be Ese Eja or mestizo, they had not engaged in collective discussions about the problems that arose from their differences.
The fact that people are now talking with each other about ethnic differences does not mean that before tourism the differences were not apparent. It is just that now the debates are open and they are held with the intention to resolve them for the benefit of everyone. In sum, though tourism has led to an accentuation of ethnic differences Infierno, and though the differences have led to debates that might result in the creation of two new communities, the changes are not necessarily ruinous because they are coupled with an increased transparency of opinion and a conscious collective effort to resolve the differences.
CHAPTER 7
“BECAUSE IT IS OURS”

With a pen poised above the last pages of my notebook, I scooted a chair closer to the table, and asked Victor one more question, “What is your hope for the future?”

Pausing from his task of reorganizing the bead necklaces, carved macaws, and brazil nut ashtrays on the handicrafts display, he lowered his head for a moment. “Our goal,” he began, as always, speaking for the community, “is to maintain our cultural traditions without losing touch with the modern world.” I started to write, and he continued, looking now into the distance, “I think we can manage it. We can keep our social identity, and not be overrun by the modern world. What’s important is that we remain well informed, and that we start to develop a better economy.”

José had been listening from a nearby table as he folded napkins for the evening’s guests. “I want to have a huge hacienda,” he called over, “with at least 2,000 heads of cattle. And then I’d like to travel to the United States…” He watched the tell-tale furrow of my brow as I recorded the comment (“Hmmm, I thought, that doesn’t quite jive with the ‘promise of ecotourism . . .’”), and then I heard him chuckle, “Just kidding! What I really want is to live on my farm, raise some chickens. That’s all.”

Revisiting the Promise of Ecotourism

Throughout the thesis, I have explored the idea that ecotourism can be a good approach to reconciling the goals of conservation and development. My main argument
has been that our hopes about ecotourism may be well founded, but not necessarily for all the reasons we might expect. The conventional wisdom surrounding ecotourism is that it leads to more jobs and higher incomes for local communities, while also causing relatively little harm to the environment, especially compared to slash-and-burn agriculture, hunting, logging, cattle ranching, and mining. Ecotourism seems to promise the best of both worlds: better economic welfare for local peoples and reduced pressure on natural resources.

I have proposed we begin to think about the promise of ecotourism in a different light. The experiences of Infierno suggest that the popular wisdom on ecotourism is perhaps somewhat simplistic, especially because the economic impacts of tourism everywhere are often fleeting and prone to boom-bust cycles. Over time, jobs and income from ecotourism, as in other kinds of tourism, may lead to outcomes that conflict with the goals of conservation, such as increased consumption and intensification of resource exploitation. Indeed, more jobs and higher incomes may be the most tenuous, superficial, and risky (from a conservation perspective) impacts of ecotourism.

The experiences of Infierno suggest that the more profound and longer-lasting impact of ecotourism for host communities can be its role as a springboard to critical thinking, learning, and ultimately the strengthening of local autonomy. Because ecotourism is an unusual kind of development project, one that holds a mirror of expectations to locals, brings the market to them, and rewards them for cultural expression and beauty in nature, it fosters learning in ways that other development projects might not. Specifically, ecotourism can compel people to ask questions about themselves and their own futures; to discuss how best to represent themselves and their
community to the world, consciously deciding what images to project, and which ones to keep private; to notice with new eyes their own resources, talents, and skills, and then to think critically about how they might be used, protected, altered, or enhanced for the most appropriate application to variously defined local goals.

These are not the types of processes that typically unfold when tourism is imposed on locals by outsiders, or when tourism does involve locals but merely as employees or service providers. The critical element in making ecotourism a viable tool for long-term conservation and development is local involvement in the higher echelons of decision-making and control.

When ecotourism is managed locally, even an economic failure can improve people’s lives over the long-term. This is because when people are participating, “failure” can—and always does—lead to learning. When people are participating, and something goes wrong, they can take stock of the situation for themselves, reassess what they did and didn’t do, and then decide what they might do differently the next time. When local residents are not participating actively and something goes wrong, outsiders who are directing the project can pull out, leaving locals with little of benefit and an even greater dependency on others for help in the future. As long as people are participating actively, they are more likely to be jump-starting their own ideas and thinking critically about what works and does not.

The case of ecotourism in Infierno provides several examples of how people have been transformed through their participation in ecotourism, rather than simply made richer. The ethnic disputes I described in Chapter 6 are certainly one result of Posada Amazonas, yet they could be seen either as a positive impact or a negative one,
depending on how people are participating in the project. Had the project been directed only by outsiders who hired members of Infierno to work in the lodge, the exacerbation of ethnic tensions could certainly have been deplored as a major failure of the project.

Certainly, it is not the goal of any conservation or development project to incite conflict or tension within communities.

Yet, the ethnic fall-out in Infierno, though undeniably catalyzed by tourism, has not been a failure of the project. Instead, it has become an opportunity for people to discuss openly the problems that have been bubbling below the surface for at least twenty years. Today the Ese Eja and the mestizos and the children of mixed families are talking face to face about issues that were only the stuff of ill-spirited gossip just three years ago. They are having ongoing debates about their differences, and what it means to be Ese Eja or mestizo or something else, and whether or not they should split to form two (or more?) separate communities.

Metaphorically and literally the members of Infierno are stepping back, looking at each other and at themselves, assessing and reassessing their differences, and ultimately questioning if the diversity among them is their greatest strength or their most debilitating weakness. Their collective questioning, though not always harmonious, has nevertheless been productive and meaningful. No one in Infierno is lost in a quagmire of ethnic conflict, pointing fingers at who belongs and who does not. Rather, they are engaging with other on the most fundamental meanings of self and community, cultural origin and destiny. These kinds of discussions and critical analyses can only be positive in the long run, as they are critical for gaining autonomy and self-determination.
In closing the thesis, I have tried to foresee the possibilities for the future of Infierno, for the people and the forests in which they live, in the year 2015. That is the year the joint venture will end officially. What will people be doing then? Will they have ceased to be a farming community? How will they look and behave and speak? How will the private, “backstage” Infierno differ from the world the tourists see?

I could make conjectures and predictions, and I could answer all of my own questions with singular truths. I could say, “they’re going this way or that.” Yet, I wonder if my imagination is expansive enough to capture all of the possibilities. Where I see contradiction and limitation, people in Infierno see complementary goals and new opportunities. In a single breath, they talk about “cultural rescue” and the need to return to tradition and authenticity, even as they make plans to open an office (with a telephone/fax, computer, and internet) in the rapidly growing urban center of Puerto Maldonado. They make plans to re-learn Ese Eja and to teach it consciously to their children, even as they attend nightly classes to get a handle on English, practicing it whenever possible with tourists. They discuss expanding the road and welcoming outsiders to visit them—maybe to watch a soccer game, buy handicrafts, learn about Ese Eja tradition, even as they worry about what to do with the slow, but steady influx of new colonists.

Recently, leaders in Infierno established agreements with three other Peruvian tourism companies with lodges along the Tambopata River. Each of the three companies agreed to pay the community to enter Infierno by road from Puerto Maldonado, and then connect to boats awaiting them in the community’s river port. To get from the road to the river by way of the community, tourists will pass through the area where children sit in...
their open-door classrooms, where the men and women walk to each other's homes and fields, where parents with infants visit the small health clinic for monthly development check-ups, where on occasional Saturdays community members gather for meetings, and where on all the Sundays entire families join to play soccer, cheer, drink beer and eat pan de arroz. If there is any place, any physical location, in Infierno that might be called its heart, this is it—precisely where three company's worth of tourists will begin traipsing through on a twice-daily basis.

Meanwhile, the newly expanded road between Infierno and Puerto Maldonado has become the source of increased traffic in and out of the community. Trucks and vans filled with city dwellers, merchants, and increasing numbers of day trippers and curiosity seekers (“Let’s drive to the native community today—I hear there’s a soccer game.”) pull up alongside the school almost everyday.

These new developments make the controversy, concern, and excitement surrounding Infierno's initial agreement with Rainforest Expeditions seem like a distant memory, one that surely was important while I was recording it, but that now feels almost trivial. Clearly, Posada Amazonas is just one of several factors of change in Infierno. Others drivers of change include colonization, agricultural expansion, urbanization, and the globalization of local markets. As these various kinds of influences converge to reshape the social and natural landscapes in Infierno, as in other places throughout the Amazon, it will become harder and harder to discern what tourism, relative to other activities, has caused.
Conversations and Decisions at the Crossroads

"'Ecotourism' is something managed by the community. ‘Tourism’ is something that comes from the outside."

--Member of the Ke’eway Association, Infierno, 1998

I will close the thesis with several stories from Infierno. Each of these lingered in my thoughts as I connected the pieces of this study, and, in many ways they seemed to illustrate more vividly and persuasively the important, if early, impacts ecotourism has already had in Infierno. Each of the stories represent moments in which I felt I was witness to something out of the ordinary in Infierno, moments when it seemed I was literally watching people arrive at a new crossroads in their history. Many events and conversations probably felt more momentous to me than they might have seemed to other people--my mode as “social analyst” ensured this. Yet, some of the decisions I saw unfolding in Infierno seemed especially meaningful, even to the most casual observer.

One of these was during a 1999 workshop for development planning in which community members had drawn pictures of their visions of Infierno, twenty years into the future. After each of the drawings had been taped to a makeshift board and hung from the wooden support beams of the lodge, the participants began walking slowly from picture to picture, as if in a gallery, quietly contemplating the art. At one point, one of the mestizo elders stepped forward to scrutinize a younger man’s drawing more carefully. After a few moments, he remarked, “No se puede ... you can’t have agriculture overlapping with tourism.” The next person beside him, an Ese Eja man who had been serving as secretary of the Ecotourism Committee for several months, moved in closer to
study the drawing. “Si, eso es verdad, especially if there’s a Harpy nest nearby. We shouldn’t clear forest around those areas.”

Everyone’s eyes focused on the picture as they stood in silence. Finally, one of the owners of Rainforest Expeditions interjected, almost sheepishly: “Isn’t agriculture important for tourism too? I mean, the tourists have to eat, the staff needs to eat, right? Maybe farming could be planned in a different way in the future, maybe restricted to certain zones.” Several people nodded in agreement as they began to debate the idea of zoning for agriculture.

They did not reach a conclusion that afternoon, but the fact that they even had the conversation is worth noting because it illustrates one of the more profound impacts ecotourism has had in Infierno. In that gathering around the hand-drawn visions of Infierno, people were not focusing on how much money they would be earning from tourism, or on how many staff persons the lodge would employ in twenty years. Rather, they were involved in a spirited discussion that was more strategic and far-reaching in that it concerned the very future of the community. This kind of visioning is more likely to occur, I believe, when local residents are active participants in making tourism a long-term option for their livelihoods.

On a separate occasion, this time in a general assembly meeting, the community members who had gathered under the corrugated tin roof of the casa comunal were voting on whether or not to approve a new road that would wind through Infierno, paralleling the Tambopata River as far south as the confluence with the Malinowski river. As they began to exchange ideas, a couple of people raised their hands to comment on potential conflicts with the tourism project. Doña Elisa, a founding member of Infierno,
and the mother of a man who had begun working as a guide in the lodge, spoke up first, "No, we can not permit a road," she declared, "We have tourism. What about the business for our children?" Lucía, a young woman beside her, looked down at the small boy fidgeting on her lap and nodded.

From across the room, Rafael spoke up next: "Others would come in," he said, pointing his finger didactically, "and they would just clear more forest for their chacras. The animals would disperse. What about our project? Tourists come to see wildlife."

These comments were astonishing, especially because roads have so often been equated with development in the Amazon. In interviews just weeks before that assembly, people had told me that the already existing road connecting Infierno to Puerto Maldonado was a positive development for the community. In particular, they explained, the road was important for transporting their goods to the market, for evacuating people in times of medical emergency, and also ("maybe in the future"), for inviting outsiders to visit and buy handicrafts. So, it seemed especially significant that, by consensus, the community would vote to say no to an extension of the road in favor of keeping the forests within the community intact. To me, this was one form of recognition of ecotourism as a viable development alternative, and one that would exist only so long as people planned the use of their land and resources carefully.

Later in the assembly, Diomedis, an Andean migrant from Puno who had been living in the Cascajal sector of the community from more than a decade and was earning the most from agriculture and cattle than anyone else in Infierno, raised a powerful point. He stood and faced the president as he spoke:

"Señor President, la palabra: We are deciding between two groups. For some of us, the road is especially important to be able to transport our
agricultural products. For others, it’s more important to maintain traditions. So we must choose: on the one side, development; on the other, tradition.”

Thanking Diomedis and then surveying the faces in the crowd, the president of Infierno that year, a young Ese Eja man who had been actively involved in tourism and was also the leader of the “cultural rescue” efforts, responded, “We cannot decide now, but it is most important that we remain well organized among ourselves. We will be able to continue this discussion in latter meetings.”

No outsiders were present in these community meetings to “facilitate” the thoughtful debate (I had become something of a normal fixture, observing and taking notes, but making no effort to sway opinion). The absence of outside influence is what made these discussions fascinating: the ideas about what was at stake (tradition versus development), what the trade-offs were (better access to town, fewer wildlife for tourists), and how they should decide, emanated from the community members themselves. I think it is precisely because people in Infierno are participating actively in ecotourism, an endeavor that has prompted them to examine various issues of conservation and development for themselves, not for the benefit of outsiders, that this level of self-determination is possible. Thus the true potential of ecotourism: more than just making people richer for a moment, it can prepare them to plan a sustainable future for themselves.

A final story took place in yet another general assembly meeting in which people were debating how to reconcile the way they had always done things in Infierno with the new limitations and opportunities presented to them in the context of tourism. The community coordinator for Posada Amazonas had raised his hand in the meeting to inform the members that the community upriver had located a Harpy eagle nest in their
territory, and that they were planning to advertise the nest for tour groups visiting a competitor lodge. There was some murmur of concern about what to do when one of the men who had initially located Harpy nest in Infierno spoke up: “It does not matter—other communities can find Harpy eagle nests, and that’s fine. But the other community found a nest that is six hours away from the river edge. Ours is only a one-hour walk away from the river. We’re still winning.”

“Winning,” I thought. They are not talking about a soccer match, or a land dispute, but rather a competition over viewing access to a species of bird that just a few years ago was no more than an occasional prey for feathers. I wrote in my notebook: “This seems to signal a change in the community’s valuation of Harpy eagles.” For a moment, I considered I might be giving too much weight to just one man’s comment. And then the conversation switched to an issue regarding the Giant otters in the community’s oxbow lake, Tres Chimbadas.

Apparently, people from neighboring communities were visiting the lake to fish, and there was some concern that too much fishing would threaten the viability of the otter population, which relies heavily on fish for their diet. The president stood from where he was sitting at the officers’ table, and walked to the center of the room. “If the otters leave,” he began, “it affects us all. They are our key attraction for tourists.” No one questioned what the president meant, no one argued that the fish were there to be caught, no one pointed out that the other fishermen were, in fact, a competition for fishermen in Infierno. The problem as they perceived it was that other fishermen were competing with the otters, and the otters had become important to community. As a result of that
meeting, the members decided to form a committee that would be responsible for guarding the lake and ensuring that no one fished there without prior authorization.

**Conclusion**

The title of the thesis and of this chapter is, “Because it is ours . . .” I chose these four simple words to represent the most important lesson I learned over four years of research in Infierno. The words are important because they are what so many people used to commence their answers to a range of different questions. I would ask, “Why have you chosen to work at Posada Amazonas?” or “Why do you think tourists visit Posada Amazonas?” or “Why have you volunteered to be a part of the Ecotourism Committee,” and like a mantra, men and women, Ese Eja and mestizos, young and old would begin, “*Porque es de nosotros . . .*” The answer must have been obvious because so many people seemed incredulous that I even needed to ask.

The realization that Posada Amazonas is an unusual experiment among ecotourism projects, special because it is locally owned and operated, is not lost on the people of Infierno. Indeed, their words reflect a profound consciousness of the ways in which their lodge—*their* lodge—is different. It is precisely their mindfulness of the rights and responsibilities they have to initiate what they want, follow-through, evaluate, make changes, and then re-initiate that will make a long term positive difference for conservation and development in Infierno. It is also their cognizance of the fact that other people will be paying attention and offering support when they need it. Finally, it is their understanding that whatever happens, everyone will be learning from the process, thinking critically about the changes that are happening *as they are happening*, rather
than once it’s too late. This ultimately will be the key to ensuring the success of ecotourism in Infierno, both for the people who live there and for forests in which they live.
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APPENDIX A
INVESTMENT AND FINANCING FOR POSADA AMAZONAS

Table 1 Investment and Financing for the Lodge (In SUS Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Pre-Operation</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru-Canada</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainforest Expeditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Community of Infierno</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacArthur Foundation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rainforest Expeditions

Rainforest Expeditions agreed to seek financing for the project and identify various sources of support. After nine months of searching, a bilateral funding source, the Peru-Canada Fund, agreed to a three-year financing contract. The Fund first dispersed an amount of $250,000, sixty per cent of which was allocated for infrastructure, including palm thatching, wood sidings, cane and clay, wooden floors and support posts, and forty percent of which was earmarked for equipment, including furniture, kitchen supplies, bathroom fixtures, etc. The funding was provided as a loan to Rainforest Expeditions over three years after which time, full ownership of the lodge and its contents was transferred to the community. After the transfer, the Ke’eway Association was responsible for paying 40% of the loan (or the amount disbursed for equipment).
In exchange for receiving the other 60% of the funds from Peru-Canada in the form of a grant rather than a loan, the partners had to agree to the following conditions: 1) Rainforest Expeditions agreed to invest in administrative infrastructure and marketing at an approximate value of $55,000; and 2) the Native Community agreed to invest labor into building the lodge, at an estimated value of $60,000.

The partners later sought an additional disbursement of $75,000 to construct a wing of six rooms. An estimated $75,000 to $100,000 was still needed to finish other additions to the lodge, including administrative offices, personnel rooms, stock rooms, a guest bar, and elevated wooden bridges to connect each of the thatched modules. The total investment in the lodge, upon completion, will be $550,000. Of the total amount, $425,000 will have been invested in infrastructure (i.e., construction, equipment, and supplies), and the rest in administration, marketing, and labor.

Rainforest Expeditions assumes full risk on the investment, but all reinvestment decisions are made by the company before profits are split. If reinvestment decisions were made otherwise, the community would be required to assume more of the risk. Because the community has no capital other than land, their communally titled land would become collateral. As the agreement stands, the Infierno is not at risk of losing their land, even if Posada Amazonas fails financially.
APPENDIX B
POSADA AMAZONAS: DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES AND TOURS

Posada Amazonas is situated 10 minutes from the right bank of the Tambopata River on the opposite side of beach known locally as Hermosa Grande. Tourists reach the lodge by walking 10 minutes on wooden staircases and dirt trail from the river bank. It is built as a comfortable lodge, almost luxurious, yet made from local materials, including wood, palm thatch, wild cane, and clay.

The lodge itself consists of a complex of ten sections: guest rooms, dining area and kitchen, hammock lounge, and personnel quarters. The dining area can host up to eighty and is designed also as a workshop and presentation area. The entire lodge is covered by “crisneja” palm fronds, and the floors are laid with tropical mahogany.

The guest rooms are large (4 x 7 meters) with two or three double beds each and a private bathroom with cold running water. One side of each room is open to the forest, free of either screens or windows. The rooms are separated by walls made of cane and covered with clay, which helps regulate the temperature of the rooms as well as muffle sounds between neighbors in adjoining rooms.

Outside the lodge, 15 minutes by foot trail is a 35-meter scaffolding tower, with staircase steps for climbing to a canopy-level view of the forest and the Tambopata river.

The typical itinerary includes:

- an ethnobotanical walk through the forest, led by a member of the community and translated by one of Rainforest Expeditions’ guides. Together, the two guides explain
the medicinal and household uses of more than 30 species of plants. Though in 1999, one member of the community learned enough English to be able to conduct the tour without the help of a translator.

- a one and a half hour walk through a typical chacra. Here tourists learn about slash and burn agriculture, and they are shown a variety of fruit and vegetable crops cultivated locally;

- a visit to two clay licks, one frequented mostly by Red and Green macaws (*Ara chloroptera*); the other, by Cobalt-winged parakeets (*Brotogeris cyanoptera*) and Dusky-headed parakeets (*Aratinga weddellii*);

- a morning visit to an oxbow lake in which tourists cruise on a catamaran for three hours and are likely to encounter a family of giant otters.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amanda Stronza was born in Maryland and raised in the Shenandoah Valley of West Virginia. In 1990, she graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from the George Washington University with a B.A. in International Affairs. For three years before enrolling in the Tropical Conservation and Development Program at the University of Florida, she worked in the Latin American Division of Conservation International. She has lived and/or studied in Belize, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the Philippines, but her main region of focus since 1990 has been the Tambopata Candamo Reserved Zone in southeastern Peru. She has worked several times as a professional facilitator for conservation planning workshops, and her research interests include social and environmental change in Amazonia, local involvement in conservation planning, economic incentives for natural resource management, and community-based ecotourism.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Marianne Schmink
Chairman
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Russell H. Bernard
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Irma McClaurin
Associate Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Peter Hildebrand
Professor of Food and Resource Economics

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 2000

Dean, Graduate School