

## More or less local: Negotiating modernity amidst tourism and other human movements case studies in Nepal



Photo by the Author, 2007

Adam Linnard

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adamlinnard@msn.com

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**Abstract:** There is a vast literature available on the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism on host societies. The conclusions of these studies have been mixed in their assessment of how and why tourism has the impacts it does, and whether or not these impacts are negative. This paper describes case studies of two small tourist-oriented towns in Nepal - Khumjung in the Himalayas and Sauraha in the Tarai - to introduce and discuss how tourism instigates, alters, and exacerbates other forms of human movement in a unique way, and how this phenomenon affects local negotiations with external, often globalizing, forces. In conclusion, the author argues that tourism profoundly disrupts conventional understandings of “local” and, particularly through the presence of tourists themselves, functionalizes “global” actors and interests as aspects of “local” in their negotiations with modernity.

A previous discussion of the research presented here is available on Digital Collections @ SIT:

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## Introduction

Tourism is often cited as the world's largest industry, employing almost nine percent of the world's employed population (Hall and Higham, 2005: 9) and turning over more money each year than the oil, weapons, or automotive industries (Bajracharya and Shakya, 1998: 237). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2008), tourism grew an average of 6.5 percent annually between 1950 and 2005; there were 842 million international tourist arrivals in 2006; and projections estimate that there will be more than 1.5 billion international tourists in 2020. As a result, tourism is an enormous subject analyzed from many disparate perspectives with disparate objectives. The focus of this paper is on development within tourist destinations, though in the process will incorporate facets of many theoretical schools, including sociology and anthropology, industry management, ecology, and economics, in the hopes that a multidisciplinary approach will contribute to a more complete understanding of tourism's interactions with its host communities.

Many authors have outlined the theoretical capacity of tourism to contribute to local and national development, matched by countless after-the-fact, site-specific analyses of tourism and development demonstrating tourism's various economic, cultural, and environmental impacts on host societies. There is, in this equation, a remarkable absence of theoretical work on the way tourism as an industry interacts with its destinations (Meethan, 2001), a fact which inhibits appropriate tourism planning.

It is the intention of this paper to contribute to theoretical understandings of how tourism engages with host populations. Building on important understandings of tourism as a modern practice and a modern industry interpreted through the local cultural environment, two case studies from rural Nepal are used to illustrate how tourism, both as human movement and as an instigator of human movement, changes the constitution of the local in that equation, and thus affects ownership of the local in its negotiations with globalizing modernity.

## Tourism and Modernization

Following earlier uses for regional modernization in industrialized countries (e.g. Binnema and Niemi, 2006), the 1960s provided the perfect conditions for tourism to emerge as a major player in international development. An expanding and increasingly affluent middle class in the First World produced the jumbo jet and the charter tour (de Kadt, 1976: ix), lowering travel prices relative to income. As a result international tourism grew at an average of ten percent each year until the 1973 energy crisis (Crick, 1989: 310). At the same time, Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) was losing favour in the Third World. Export-orientation was experiencing a post-War rebirth on the calculation that First World capital could provide both investment and consumptive markets for Third World countries whose domestic lack of these elements had been a fundamental failing of ISI (Brohman, 1996: 50). Adhering to a country's international comparative advantage, it was believed, would increase the value of production which would increase demand, and cost paid, for their products in wealthy international markets. Foreign exchange earnings would improve the balance of payments, and Third World nations would be able to invest in new industries, propelling the country to escalating domestic production and consumption (Bookman, 2006: 34). In other words, by focusing the domestic economy on external market demands, Third World countries could modernize and grow.

Tourism fits right into the export-orientation prescription, conceptualized as an "invisible" export which, like banking, produces nothing physical to ship, but which generates foreign exchange through links to foreign consumers. This "invisibility" also suggests unlimited growth potential since it does not directly require the extraction of non-renewable resources (Duffy, 2001: 11; Stronza, 2001: 268). Low income regions can exploit their comparative advantages of affordability, exoticism, and climate (European Commission, 2002; Pandey, 2004; Verma et al., 2006; Wen & Tisdell, 2001). Some see tourism as a way to bypass industrialization altogether with its comparatively high investment costs and negative environmental consequences (Bookman, 2006: 23). As a result, by the late 1960s the International Monetary Fund and World Bank had begun including tourism planning in their structural adjustment programs to increase foreign exchange in the Third World (Brohman, 1996: 49; Duffy, 2002: 11), a trend which continues today (Honey, 1996: 79-83; UNDP, 2007).

By the mid-1970s critics began to note negative effects on local cultures and environments, claiming that to consider tourism equivalent to other export industries was to ignore the complexities of direct person-to-person and culture-to-culture interaction inherent in international travel (de Kadt, 1976). An explosion of literature has emerged in the proceeding years detailing grievances against mass tourism (e.g. Brohman, 1996; Clancy, 2001; Cohen, 2004; Gössling, 2001; Lea, 1988; Pattullo, 1996; Weaver and Elliot, 1996). Common criticisms include increased dependency on foreign capital, technology, and organization; high economic leakages; lack of integration into the local economy preventing potential multiplier effects; externalization of waste and its associated costs to the host country; environmental destruction for construction and recreation; degrading and low-paying work; increased social and economic stratification; and cultural commoditization and misappropriation. Clearly, the practical development shortcomings of tourism are not only what the industry has failed to account for (cultural and environmental vulnerability), but also what had

been claimed to be its strengths (economic growth).

In response to these critiques a number of alternative tourism strategies have emerged, variously labelled 'green tourism,' 'nature tourism,' 'responsible tourism,' 'ethical tourism,' 'ecotourism,' and simply 'alternative tourism'. While there are particularities to each of these, in practice the distinctions are largely semantic and there has emerged a general consensus that these alternatives can collectively be defined as attempting to achieve the following:

tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes. (Butler, 1993: 29)

Alternative tourism forms, where applied, have had very modest success in reducing the ills of mass tourism. For instance, dependence on foreign investment capital has been reduced through the low investment costs of alternative tourism, though these costs remain prohibitive to the majority of the population. Local economic linkages have been improved, but are still notably weak, particularly with agriculture (Bookbinder *et al.*, 1998; Ormsby and Mannle, 2006). Cultural commodification has demonstrated the ability to reinvigorate cultural properties and defend heterogeneity (Grünewald, 2002; Ortner, 1999; Stevens, 1993), while in other instances degrading systems of cultural reproduction and stagnating if not corroding cultural processes (Berger, 1996; Gössling, 2001; Honey, 1999). Social stratification has continued as a result of the traditional upper class being best suited to take advantage of the tourism economy (Berger, 1996; Guneratne, 2001; Stronza, 2001).

In addition, alternative tourism's objective of immersing tourists in local society and its nature of exploration into unconventional areas has caused some unique problems. David Vaughan (2000) writes that alternative tourists possess "a recognition of local culture and a willingness to forego some Western comforts in the interests of sustainable development" (285). While this may be true for some, the word "willingness" neglects the particular draw of alternative destinations. What feeds the alternative tourism market is less sacrifice than it is the particular attraction of authenticity perceived to exist in areas further into the periphery of Western modernity (Cohen, 2002; MacCannell, 1992). These tourists seek to avoid other tourists and the modernizing impacts they understand tourists to have on a destination. The vicious cycle is, of course, that the presence of tourists produces the conditions tourists do not want in a destination and thus "tourism can be the cause of its own demise" (Duffy, 2002: 13; see also Ormsby and Mannle, 2006: 273 and MacCannell, 1992: 176). For most analysts, these issues have primarily been explained as a conflict between the economic sustainability of the tourism industry and the overall sustainability of the destination (Knowles *et al.*, 2004). They may also be seen as demonstrative by-products of local negotiations with globalizing modernity.

Modernity is a set of characteristics which define, and thus propagate, what is generally considered to be "modern" society. The particulars of these characteristics are not unique to the contemporary world, but rather are more prevalent, more definitive, and more universal today than ever before (Appadurai, 1996: 27). In brief,

these characteristics include the alienation of labour from the means of production; an emphasis on the rational individual above the spiritual collective; a definition of progress which is linear, material, accumulative, and universal; and the temporal differentiation, for instance, of productive (work) from consumptive (leisure), private from public, and human society from the natural environment in terms of both time and space. Capitalism spreads modernity throughout the globe while modernity legitimates capitalism, as well as itself, through a self-supporting internal logic (Taylor, 2001), and thus the two are intricately linked in the contemporary world. Even so, anti-capitalism movements, including communism, socialism, and fascism, have usually held the same modernist assumptions and have thus promoted their own modernist visions when and where they have emerged (Harvey, 1998).

Tourism serves a modernizing agenda whether it is part of a development strategy or not. Despite the fact that tourism has existed in various forms throughout human history and across civilizations (Nash, 1996), tourism in mass numbers is a product and expression of the dominant features of modernity, including: segmentation of time and space (dividing work from leisure) made possible through the alienation of labour from the means of production (creating dependence on wage labour) (Meethan, 2001); social alienation and personal isolation that lead many to romanticize “pre-modern” or “primitive” societies which are perceived (and marketed) as somehow more authentic than modern ones (Cohen, 2002; Guneratne, 2001; McMinn, 1997; Zurick, 1992); and the expansion of global networks through new transportation and communication technologies. Tourism as a modern phenomenon is a large topic, but not the focus of this paper. Presently, the concern is instead with tourism as a projection of modernity.

In a rare and significant attempt to theorize tourism’s role in host societies, Kevin Meethan explains that “tourism creates forms of social space” demarcated physically and designated for the pursuit of leisure” (2001: 16). This differentiation of spatial meanings, he continues, “means change at the level of lived experience for those whose space of home, or of work, is the space of leisure for others” (37). He asserts that these changes represent a negotiation between “different forms of knowledge, different ways of thinking about the organisation [*sic*] of the social world and people within it and different ways of deriving meaning from the environment” (38). In other words, in changing a location from a community to a tourist destination, conventional symbols and meanings of space and human relations to it are necessarily disrupted through the expansive commodification and consumption (via capitalism) “of areas in the life of a community which prior to its penetration by tourism have not been within the domain of economic relations regulated by criteria of market exchange” (Cohen, 2002: 101). For example, when environmental conservation is “seen through the value system of the foreign tourist, rather than that of the local people” (McMinn, 1997: 140), new (read: modern) meanings are applied to traditional spaces. Simultaneously, tourism instigates a shift in the foundations of local economic activity so that, as demand becomes increasingly touristic, the type of required labour shifts as well, enforcing an outward-oriented wage labour standard (Bookman, 2006: 106). Because this process is inherent to the practice of designating spaces for touristic consumption, this is true equally of mass tourism and its alternatives and is significant in understanding how and why tourism changes host communities.

Because it has a vested interest in protecting unique cultures and environments, is inherently expansive and increasingly present in unconventional destinations, and simultaneously represents a modernizing agenda, tourism provides a particularly fruitful forum for the investigation of modernity and the nature of its spread into the periphery of the global order. The nature of this process is the topic of the following section.

## Modernity as Negotiation

The expansion of modernity has often been seen as a neo-colonial endeavour of imposing and enforcing a specific set of values on other societies, resulting in cultural shock and subsequent erosion. Stefan Gössling (2001) provides an example of this position. In a community on the island of Zanzibar, in Tanzania, Gössling observes how tourism has increased demand for natural resources while simultaneously reducing their availability. The resultant inflation has forced fishermen to adopt new modes of production in order to increase yields from a decreasing population. Not only has this created a cycle of ecological degradation, but alienation from the ecosystem and the means of production also “weaken[s] the role of tradition because the comparative advantage of indigenous knowledge decreases when production strategies become less dependent on the local environment” (446). As a result, traditional means of monitoring exploitation have been irretrievably lost, replaced only by the exploitive demands of the market (see also McMinn, 1997: 140; Oakes, 1999: 328; Stevens, 1993: 421).

Tourism in this equation acts as modernity’s instigator, replacing traditional practices by displacing the locally-derived interpretations that legitimize them. In the presence of a dominant ideology of modernization backed by a coercive economic and political infrastructure, the space for negotiation is reduced by limiting choices to those within the frame of the commercial market (Marglin, 1991). To paraphrase Miriam Wright (2001), the linear and material view of progress shapes the way people think about the developmental problems they face and limits the range of their possible solutions (156). Or, in the words of Arturo Escobar (1994), the dominant development hegemony “determines what can be thought and said [...] from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise” in discussions of progress and process (40-41). In summary, this interpretation of modernity’s expansion is that it is a foreign imposition, forcing local people, cultures and economies to produce for foreign demand, interpret their reality according to the precepts of foreign value systems, and perpetuate the hierarchical global order. By replicating the global power structure on a local level, tourism can be seen as particularly efficient in this regard (Nash: 85).

Offering a very different assessment of the tourist economy’s relationship with local traditions, Rodrigo de Azeredo Grünewald writes of the Pataxó Indians of the Brazilian coast. He argues that the incorporation of other cultural forms (as in adapting traditional handicrafts to suit foreign tastes) does not make the culture inauthentic and, indeed, allowing local culture to be constantly reformulated to fit changing contexts maintains cultural dynamism and helps to ensure its survival. Grünewald also makes the case that commodification has encouraged the resurgence of old cultural forms and, more significantly, led to the creation of new ones that are distinctly Pataxó, helping them assert a unique ethnic identity that had been stripped by Portuguese colonialism. Grünewald is by no means the only observer to come to this conclusion (Boissevain and Inglott, 1976; Ortner, 1999), though his is particularly optimistic.

These two cases exemplify polar views of the capacity of local populations to negotiate the terms of modernity against globalizing forces. Gössling assumes the local population has very little control against the global sweep of capitalism, while Grünewald finds them entirely capable of adapting to the new conditions of global in-

tegration without any loss of cultural ownership. The reality, as usual, is more complicated, and the negotiations between local and global forces are multi-faceted and have multiple effects. Charles Taylor (2001) offers some insight in this regard. He argues that western modernity represents a specific “constellation of understandings of person, nature, society, and the good” (179) which exclude alternative understandings by determining legitimacy according to modernity’s own internal logic. By investigating the beliefs inherent in western modernity, it is possible to understand that it is “one constellation of such visions among available others” (176). This allows for the different application of modern features according to different cultural valuations and allows us to speak of “alternative modernities.” What is important to recognize is that neither the continuation/development nor the cessation/alteration of specific cultural practices can be taken as definitive proof that tourism has strengthened or weakened local culture. Instead, of most significance is local ownership over the definitions and interpretations of what modernity ultimately means.

In Nepal, Stacy Leigh Pigg (1992, 1996) demonstrates the ways the developmental ideology of modernization has been deeply incorporated into rural life, creating, enforcing, and providing the means for measuring relative levels of development. She argues, however, that when “villagers assimilate the ideology of modernization, they do so by incorporating it into local social identity” (1992: 502). Taylor speaks of the *integration* of “universal features of modernity” into different cultural contexts (2001: 180) while Meethan makes the case that the processes of change associated with tourism are *mediated* ones, *negotiated* at global, international, national, regional and local levels (2001: 40). This may be demonstrated best by Arjun Guneratne’s (2001) research in Nepal’s south-central Chitwan district, where he observes how high caste dominance of the tourism industry has reformulated traditional but dying caste hierarchies by reformulating them according to relative levels of modernization. Tourists, as “members of the global ‘forward caste’” (540), demonstrate the model of modernization locally and thus help to differentiate between groups at a time when older forms are falling into disuse. In Chitwan, the indigenous Tharu population is explicitly presented as “primitive native people and one of the last of the indigenous tribes of the subcontinent who remain virtually untouched by civilization” (534), allowing high caste tour guides to align themselves with tourists on the modern side of the divide. While this reformulation gives new strength to old hierarchies, they are newly cast as individually transcendent. That is, a Tharu will always be a Tharu in the caste system, but a “primitive” can grow into a “modern” through education. Modernity here can clearly be seen to be adapted to local circumstances.

Guneratne’s point is important in that it distinguishes tourism from other strategies of development, including the conventional project-oriented ones demonstrated by Pigg. Whereas Pigg illustrates that the state and development organizations have hegemonically produced a clear hierarchy between the village and the city (1992), and the “believing villager” and the “knowing medical expert” (1996), Guneratne’s work shows that with tourism the “global stage is brought to the village” (2001: 540), producing a third level of distinction. With tourism there is a local hierarchy differentiating between productive villager (Tharu farmer), cosmopolitan labourer (high caste Bahun-Chhetri tour guide), and foreign visitor (Guneratne, 2001) -

a hierarchy echoing the rural Nepali tendency to distinguish levels of development by whether or not one “carries loads” (Pigg, 1992: 507). This internalization of the global order is significant, and is central to tourism’s unique role in the expansion of modernity.

To relate back to Grünewald’s argument, tourism may create an opportunity to distinguish unique cultures and thus counteract homogenization, but this does not preclude the enforcement of cultural stagnation and hierarchies along those very lines. Indeed, the outward emphasis on cultural distinction may provide a convenient mask for more fundamental political and cultural suppression - as by the government of Belize against Mayans (Duffy, 2002) - or as a means for communicating the dominant culture’s particular interpretation of disputed cultural property to a national and international audience - as in China’s utilization of heritage sites to “project national roots into an imaginary unitary past, thereby justifying contemporary national boundaries” in regards to its contentious claims to Tibet (Shepherd, 2006: 249; see also Hevia, 2001). Again, material cultural reproduction cannot be assumed to represent true local cultural control.

What is clear from the above arguments but is seldom represented in examinations of cultural change in modern times is that what ultimately constitutes cultural traditions are systems of knowing, interpreting and projecting, or in the words of Taylor, “a constellation of understandings of person, nature, society, and the good” (2001: 179). These different systems produce different cultural property as a result and, while cultural property is defined by the cultural systems that produced it, cultural systems are not defined by their products. This allows cultures to be fluid without being inconsistent. The fundamental concern is therefore the ability to demonstrate ownership over negotiations of the processes of cultural change to suit changing circumstances. As a cross-cultural and integrative economic force, tourism necessitates change. While there is certainly an effort in parts of the tourism industry to preserve foreign cultures as they are, there is emerging recognition that no culture is stagnant, and to restrict adaptability is, ironically, to break with traditional processes of negotiated progress. In his critical assessment of sustainable tourism, Stuart McMinn sums up the most common prescription for assuring that the host population defines the processes of change, and thus benefits most from it:

It must be assured that decisions with respect to the sustainability of a tourism development rest ultimately with the host community and that this group assess the potential impacts on the social and natural environment, of which they are an integral part. (1997: 141)

The assumption is that by giving as much control as possible to local people, local interests will be served and development will be locally sustainable. With the exception of Murray C. Simpson (2008) - whose assertion that local ownership gets in the way of the positive impacts of tourist development by restricting and diluting economic growth and environmental conservation sounds a lot like the civilizing missions of colonial empires who always knew what was best for the natives - the assertion that local people must exercise control in order to benefit is almost universal.

The faith in comparative advantage and export-orientation remains the dominant perspective in development planning, which has left the ideological space for

tourism to continue its legitimized expansion. Beginning with de Kadt, the majority of critical assessments have refused to condemn tourism or its ideological foundations, instead proposing organizational modifications. Both critics and advocates of conventional tourism are charmed by tourism's potential for creating jobs, building foreign exchange, and facilitating skills development and technology transfer (Simpson, 2008: 3). The recommendations of these critics led to the formulation of new tourism strategies seeking to capture the economic benefits while mitigating or, better yet, inverting the negative impacts on host societies and environments. As Rosaleen Duffy (2002, 2005) explains, however, alternative tourism does not threaten the modernizing agenda, fitting neatly into the hierarchies embedded within it. Indeed, alternative tourism may prove even more powerful an agent of modernization than conventional mass tourism, since the alternatives penetrate deeper into the global periphery and deeper into host societies (see also Honey 1999: 90; Patullo, 1996: 132), though issues of neo-colonialism and cultural destruction are dependent on factors more complex than the reproduction of physical cultural property.

## Tourism and Human Movement

Many of the case study assessments of tourism's impacts have noted increased labour migration for the largely seasonal work demanded by tourism (Gössling, 2001: 440; Grünewald, 2002: 1009; McMinn, 1997: 137). Others have observed the displacement of local populations by capital-rich tourism players (Di Ciommo, 2007: 58; Rogers, 2007: 13). Yet remarkably few have understood that, as an expression of mobility itself, tourism has a unique relationship with other types of human movement. As Milica Z. Bookman writes:

Tourism, an industry based on population movements *par excellence*, results in yet other kinds of population movements as people adjust to tourism-induced changes in the labour market [...]. Thus, one type of movement induces others and at the same time is enabled by those others in a self-reinforcing causal flow. [...] By understanding all the population movements, we can understand how to harness tourism's potential for the benefit of LDC inhabitants. (2006: 4)

Bookman's assessment is that migration is a natural product of a modernizing economy. She argues that if the labour needs of the new economy cannot be met by the local population, appropriate labour will be imported (106). Where there is enough demand this may result in the establishment of new towns of migrant workers (89), while in other locations workers engaged in non-touristic enterprises may be displaced (106). Simultaneously, high-skilled migrants are likely to arrive, meeting a demand that the local population is unable to satiate (102).

Because of her economic focus, Bookman sees tourism as functioning little different from other industries. Tourist-led changes in demand are argued to be the instigator of other forms of voluntary and involuntary movement (45), though this could just as easily be said of a peripheral location with a coal mine or manufacturing plant since these also require specific types of labour. Like other capital-rich industries, tourism raises the opportunity costs of engaging in other economic activities, including agriculture, encouraging if not coercing work in the wage-labour tourism industry (Stronza, 2001: 269). Whether through the exposure of peripheral populations to external markets and finance through national debt and structural adjustment, or through the introduction of tourism as an agent of modernization, the matter of importance is the transition from subsistence to wage labour, a characteristic of capitalist penetration into non-capitalist societies (read: capitalist modernity into "pre-modern" societies). Since this shift in dependency does not necessarily mean that corresponding wage opportunities are available in a given location, migration becomes a necessary survival strategy (Martínez, 1995; Massey *et al.*, 1993; Portes and Walton, 1981; Shrestha, 1989; Stalker, 2000). If the wage opportunities happen to be available in tourism, tourist destinations are likely to receive those migrants. This much makes sense within any migration theory pertaining to economic disparities.

What is of greater interest here is how tourism is distinct from other industries, which requires a look beyond economics. Without making this distinction, Bookman still shows that tourism has the capacity to drastically change the demographic makeup of destination communities. If modernity is negotiated locally and integrated according to community world-views, and if tourism's success as a business and as a means for protecting cultural and environmental integrity are dependent on local

ownership and community benefit, then the question that begs to be asked, but seldom is, is how the very presence of tourism affects the generally assumed terms of “local” and “community.” If the population in a destination changes as a result of tourism, then “local” negotiations with modernity change as well.

The following section offers two case studies of tourist-dependent villages in Nepal which have had very different interactions with tourism and migration. The aim of the research was to establish how tourism affects human movement and thus how it affects the makeup of the local. Research in Khumjung took place during two stays in the village, each lasting roughly one and a half weeks during peak trekking season in mid October and mid November, 2007. Research in Sauraha occurred following the second stay in Khumjung, for 11 days during peak tourist season in the region, late November and early December, 2007. These locations were chosen for possessing the necessary controlled variable of a tourism-dependent economy, while differing in nearly every other respect, including ethnic demographics, religion, climate and geography, dominant tourist activities, and land-use restrictions.

The primary method was informal interview or conversation, in Khumjung conducted almost exclusively in Nepali, and in Sauraha roughly equal amounts Nepali and English. Formal interviews proved unwarranted for several reasons. First, neither research location was so busy that it was impossible to speak with tourism workers or local people without pre-arrangement. Second, participation in tourism in both locations is predominantly undertaken by people without strict schedules, offices, or other features that would suggest comfort with a formal interview. Third, the objective of the research was to understand the broad and unforeseen interactions between tourism and migration, and it would therefore have been counterproductive to limit the conversation to pre-determined questions.

Informal interview was assisted by participatory observation, small survey, and participatory network mapping. Small survey was undertaken to determine some measure of quantitative data on migration in the tourism industry, but time restraints and seasonal variations make the received data more anecdotal than confidently quantitative. Participatory network mapping was chosen for Khumjung as a means of increasing direct participation while determining migration trends according to employment and place of residence. It was not used in Sauraha because the participation inherent in the informal interview was found to be undermined in network mapping by taking control and familiarity away from the interviewee, and placed definition of the process firmly on the side of the researcher. As a method it was therefore abandoned.

## Case Study 1: Khumjung, Khumbu

Khumbu is the northern region of Solukhumbu District, located on Nepal's northern border in the east of the country. It is characterized by the world's highest alpine environments, including the world's highest mountain, Mt. Everest. The sparsely populated region is home to some 3,500 inhabitants of which approximately 90% are ethnic Sherpa (Rogers, 2007: 20), with very small numbers of other caste and ethnic groups, including Rai, Tamang, Bahun, Chhetri, and Newar (Nepal, 2003: 37). Within Khumbu, Khumjung is located in a high valley at 3,790 metres elevation, immediately north of the region's commercial centre, Namche Bazaar, and immediately east of Khunde. Khumjung itself consists of approximately 160 households, but the mobile nature of the population makes an accurate estimate of the number of individuals very difficult, and it varies significantly depending on the season. The village is classified as a buffer-zone of Sagarmatha National Park, which surrounds the settled area on all sides. Khumjung is a difficult two-day hike from the Lukla airport,<sup>1</sup> or a one week trek from the nearest driveable roadway.

### *History of Mobility*

The Khumbu region has always been an area significantly defined by human movement. As a result of its high alpine environment with steep valleys, thin and rocky soil, and harsh climate, residents of Khumbu have never produced enough food to sustain their societies. This pushed the Sherpas into trade, a practice for which they were extremely well positioned, being situated between Tibet and China to the north and lowland Nepal and the rest of the Indian subcontinent to the south. The people of Khumbu produced little of tradable value, but their geographical location and their ability to carry goods across the region's extreme terrain made them ideal for bringing salt and wool out of Tibet and returning with grain, butter, cattle, paper, hides and sugar from India and the Nepali hills (Füerer-Haimendorf, 1964).

Yaks were used for high altitude expeditions into Tibet, while yak-cow hybrids known as *dzokia* were bred for their ability to travel to lower altitudes. These animals enabled mobility for trade, and also required mobility as grazing grounds were opened seasonally at different altitudes. A local system of opening and closing particular valleys for grazing developed to maintain the common property (Stevens, 1993: 421), and some 90 herding villages were built in the region for seasonal occupation (Rogers, 2007: 20). Because almost every family was engaged in trade expeditions and animal husbandry, "the time when the majority of the villagers reside within the limits of the main settlement [did] not amount to even half of the year" (Füerer-Haimendorf, 1964: 100).

A number of political changes in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century severely disrupted these patterns. When trans-Himalayan trade was effectively halted by the official Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, Khumbu's strategic trade position was undermined, and for the region's residents, as for most of those living amongst Nepal's northern Himalaya, outward migration became an increasingly popular choice (Nepal, 2003: 37). Building on the foundation of two generations of regional and ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> The trek is difficult because of distance and elevation gain. The trail is, for the most part, meticulously maintained for tourists, in contrast to the majority of trails in Nepal which are highly prone to erosion and collapse.

predecessors (Rogers: 32), many Khumbu Sherpas relocated eastward to Darjeeling, India (Fürer-Haimendorf: 4), where mountaineers since the 1920s had made Sherpas famous as good-natured, colourful and hardworking assistants in mountaineering expeditions (see Ortner (1999) for a thorough discussion of this process). At the same time, some 6,000 Tibetans, as well as their livestock, fled into Khumbu, quadrupling the local population and putting considerable stress on local grazing resources (Rogers, 2007: 39-40). Most of these were unable to establish themselves in the region and had moved on within a decade (Pawson *et al.*, 1984), though their presence remains evident in the lasting impacts on grazing grounds (Nepal, 1993: 90).

### *History of Tourism*

After the overthrow of the isolationist Rana autocracy in 1950, Nepal's first democratic government adopted a policy of openness and integration, officially opening the Kathmandu region to foreign tourists in 1953. Peripheral regions have been periodically opened since then, with Khumbu receiving its first non-mountaineer tourists in 1964, the same year Sir Edmund Hillary's school building expedition completed the airstrip at Lukla (Rogers, 2007: 41). Since then tourism has grown exponentially, jumping from roughly 1,000 visitors in 1971, to 5,000 in 1981, and 8,000 by the end of the 1980s (Stevens, 1993: 412). Although hurt by severe drops in tourist numbers in Nepal following the royal family massacre and September 11, both in 2001, and the Maoist conflict until 2007, Khumbu tourism has been hurt less than other areas of Nepal as a result of its isolation and cultural and political disassociation with lowland Nepal. Maoist cadres periodically demand financial contribution from trekkers, but this has generally not deterred tourists whose receipts from the Maoist Party are often seen as the most authentic of Nepali souvenirs. Khumbu now receives over 20,000 visitors each year (UNESCO, 2007: 19), mostly trekkers.

According to Stanley Stevens, "Khumbu Sherpas have reoriented their local economy and lifestyle around tourism to a degree unequalled elsewhere in Nepal" (1993: 414). By 1985, 75 percent of Khumbu households received direct income from tourism, with those concentrated in the main settlements, including Khumjung (414). This number can only have risen in the proceeding years. Because Khumbu is an area of international repute, curiosity, and ecological significance, a great many academic studies and travel documentations have reported on the region's cultural and environmental status to varying conclusions. While the more casual observers are prone to proclamations of environmental catastrophe and cultural devastation, academic studies have emphasized Sherpa cultural resilience, pride, and adaptability, and at least diminished the negativity of the environmental prognoses by highlighting rehabilitation and conservation successes (Byers, 1987; Nepal, 2003; Ortner, 1999; Rogers, 2007; Stevens, 1993). What none deny is the obvious economic benefit tourism has brought to Khumbu.

It is important to recognize that tourism affects human movement differently in different places, even within an area as small as Khumbu, because of different interactions with the industry. For example, Khumbu tourism has caused spatial expansion of Namche Bazaar from permanent capital migrants (Nepal, 2003: 73), made permanent towns out of many of the temporary herding villages (72), and increased and changed the primary direction of labour migration away from villages in Solu and southern Khumbu (Rogers, 2007: 78).

Six main intersections between tourism and mobility, at times overlapping, have been identified within a local Khumjung context: seasonal guide work; labour immigration; winter out-migration; low permanent out-migration; changing spheres of movement; and the presence of tourists themselves. Descriptions of these impacts and discussions of their contexts follow.

### *1: Seasonal Guide Work*

'Trekking guide' is an almost ubiquitous title for the men of Khumjung. The work takes them out of town for between two and six months each year, especially during the peak trekking season of October-November and the secondary one of March-April. During these seasons guides frequently travel from regional destinations in the north to Kathmandu, and onward to other trekking regions in Nepal and the broader Himalayas, including Annapurna, Mustang, Kanchenjunga, Langtang, and Tibet. During my time in Khumjung it was rare to find a guide in his home, and those who were present were always preparing to leave within a few days, even if just returned. When asked, local people asserted that all local guides were out working, and that none would return home until the season finished in December. Though not perfectly accurate, the hyperbole speaks of an atmosphere of absence.

Clint Rogers argues that "the seasonal nature of tourism work was similar to that of trans-Himalayan trade, adding to the ease with which Sherpas took up the new opportunities in tourism" (2007: 233). While seasonal migration is nothing new to Khumjung, guide work is unique in important ways. First, guiding treks changes the objective of movement. Formerly, movement was necessary for reaching a location at which livelihood goods could be procured. In trekking, while the destination may be the motivation for trekkers, guiding fees are paid for the movement. While it may be said that traditional trans-Himalayan trade was a capitalist practice, the switch to guide work involves a segmentation of the spheres of work and leisure in a much deeper way. Trade expeditions and seasonal grazing migration encompassed all of life, including work and leisure, and a hybridization of private (family) and public (professional) life. Guiding, despite its inclusion of leisure time, is individualized wage labour, segmenting times of work and times of leisure in more definite terms (i.e. one week trekking and three days off) and dividing private and public life temporally and spatially.

Guiding has also produced and promoted a new social structure, one which in practice has been highly defined along ethnic and regional lines. Because there is such a strong association between Khumjung and the specific work of guiding, and between outsiders and the work of cooks and porters, there has developed a regional hierarchy. Khumjung is recognized by locals all along the trails of Khumbu as a place with lots of rich people, a wealth attributed almost exclusively to guiding, while the lower-ranking workers come almost exclusively from Solu and southern Khumbu.<sup>2</sup>

This may at least partly be attributed to the segmentation of the individual

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<sup>2</sup> Sherry Ortner (1999) describes in greater detail the specifics of the guide-porter hierarchy, including the severe ill treatment of porters in echo of earlier mountaineer ill treatment of Sherpas. In one particularly horrendous case, several porters were abandoned to die on a high pass without appropriate gear. This is exceptional, but illustrative.

from the collective. Traditional trade migration was undertaken collectively, and while hierarchies of decision-making certainly existed, the work and the payoff were shared. In the trekking industry, payment is individualized. This has not isolated guides from their communities, where the collective remains central to individual identity. Instead of the community, the hierarchy is most pronounced within the trekking party, where the guide is clearly above the cooks and porters. When this hierarchy is extrapolated into the broader cultural environment, it expresses itself regionally because of regional associations with particular jobs.

Another significant change from trade and grazing to guide work is the change of destination, though this will be addressed in a latter section.

## *2: Temporary Labour In-Migration*

With most local men working as guides and others taking advantage of other tourism opportunities afforded by local land ownership (stores, internet café, bakery, etc.), Khumjung is marked by a shortage of manual labour and a surplus of demand for it (see also Rogers, 2007: 210). Almost all construction, carpentry and religious art and ceremony work, and a significant amount of the agricultural work and service provision in the larger, outsider-owned lodges is done by migrants from the south. All of this work, with the exception of lodge services, was formerly done by local men (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1964). The great majority of the migrant labourers stay with those for whom they are doing the work, and only for the duration of their project because local circumstances inhibit permanent settlement. These include absolute restrictions on sprawl imposed by Sagarmatha National Park since its creation in 1976, and a strong sense of local identity and control that has expressed itself in locals' organized efforts to retain all saleable land in local hands. Along with these, climate and geography are often cited by porters and guides from the outside as reasons for preferring their home villages. The result is a large number of temporary and a very small number of permanent labour migrants, reflected by the relatively small and static population size and physical infrastructure; Khumjung's representative to the National Park Buffer-Zone Committee estimated that 12 to 13 houses have gone up in the last six years. Many of these jobs have been created because of the disposable income generated by heavy local involvement in the tourism industry. This is particularly true of the expansion and elaboration of Buddhist shrine rooms, but also in the rehabilitation of religious rock paintings and the transformation of homes into guest houses.

New and expanded shrine rooms, rock paintings, and the revitalization of other cultural expressions are easily seen as evidence of tourism's capacity to strengthen local culture (Stevens). But it should also be noted that commodifying cultural work by hiring others to do it involves a break with the traditional means of cultural regeneration. Local people are decreasingly able to contribute directly to local cultural expression and reproduction as a result of having been alienated from the means of production.

Interestingly, immigrant labour also extends into the civil service. Within Khumjung, none of the school teachers or police officers are from Khumjung or are even ethnic Sherpas, a fact at least partially attributable to the high rate of pay in the tourism industry. These workers are also predominantly temporary, partly out of

necessity and partly because they have little desire to stay long term in a harsh climate and what is essentially a foreign culture. Inter-marriage between the Nepali and Sherpa populations is rare.

### *3: Winter Out-Migration*

During the coldest months of the year, particularly late December and January, many of Khumjung's residents migrate southward while tourism lags in Khumbu. While by no means universal, and only the wealthiest families go to Kathmandu each year, this trend is certainly marked and is a significant characteristic differentiating Khumjung from most of Nepal's rural areas. In discussions with local lodge owners, six of the seven spend their winters in Kathmandu, with the other going to stay with family in Phortse, a lower-valley Khumbu village. The families are away between one and three months during which their lodges are closed and they perform no paid work. Similar trends, though with lower percentages and less time spent in the capital, were noted with non-lodge owners whose husbands work as guides. One factor that reduces the amount of time spent in the city is dependence on animal husbandry, as animals require tending irrespective of the tourist season.

The journey to and from Kathmandu is usually done by plane from Lukla, with at least one case of chartered helicopter from Khunde, though this is an elaborate exception. The expense of the journey, renting or owning a second home in Kathmandu, and one to three months without income each year cannot be divorced from the high income offered by the tourism industry. There is a strong correlation between the degree of tourism involvement and the likelihood and length of seasonal migration to Kathmandu that cannot be ignored.

The frequently cited reasons for winter migration include cold weather and snow in Khumjung, the lack of tourists, and family members living in Kathmandu (usually schoolchildren). None of these motivations can be seen as detached from the tourist economy, though all of them have a contradictory relationship with it. This helps explain why, among other reasons and despite such frequent seasonal migration, permanent migration to Kathmandu is not more pronounced than it is.

### *4: Low Permanent Out-Migration*

Compared to other areas of rural Nepal, Khumjung sends low numbers of permanent migrants. Considering the high number of seasonal migrants and the relational familiarity with Kathmandu which would make permanent migration relatively easy, this fact is even more impressive. Partly this is due to the contradictory nature of the motivating factors for seasonal migration outlined above.

While cold weather and snow encourage out-migration, tourism has also provided the base for local amenities which make such a climate easier to live in. This has been the case through personal investment in housing infrastructure as well as through the National Park Buffer-Zone Committee, which receives 50 percent of the National Park entrance fees and uses those funds for local community development. The local Buffer-Zone Committee has focused particularly on increasing electrical capacity to combat deforestation, a feature which reduces incentive to migrate during the winter months.

Even though tourist numbers are low, the industry still provides some incentive to stay in Khumjung during the off-season, to cater to the few tourists who do come

or to tend to rentable pack animals. As for family members living in Kathmandu, it is precisely because of, and/or for, tourism employment that many Khumjung natives migrate to the city. Many have used tourism money to send their children to school in Kathmandu, are familiar with the city because of frequent work-related travel there, or have moved there permanently to own or work at trekking agencies (Rogers, 2007: 88). In any case, the Khumbu tourism industry provides incentive to stay in Khumjung while simultaneously providing the capacity to leave.

Tourism has provided other reasons to stay in Khumjung as well, and these likely explain the relative absence of permanent out-migration. The first, and most significant, is pure economics. The profitability of land, livestock, and labour in Khumjung are each difficult to replicate in Kathmandu or elsewhere in Nepal. While Khumjung's position off the main trekking routes has helped keep land prices down (countering upward pressures from the definite boundaries of available supply) and reduced immigration pressures to the village, for those who have lodges or stores, rent their land for camping, raise pack animals, or perform physical labour, the money that can be made from working in Khumjung is noteworthy and not easily replicated where tourism is absent or interacts differently with the community (see also Pawson *et al.*, 1984: 80). While this is more true for wealthy residents than for poorer ones, tourism has provided some social mobility for the traditionally poor through wage labour, pack-animal hiring, and guiding (Ortner, 1999: 255).

The second reason is less straightforward. There is a mid-level school in Khumjung which teaches up to 10<sup>th</sup> class, and in nearby Khunde is a mid-level hospital. Both were originally built in the 1960s by the region's most famous tourist, Sir Edmund Hillary,<sup>3</sup> and have been expanded and funded largely by the donations of wealthy visitors. The attribution of health and education services directly to tourism is irregular, but in this case largely accurate. After all, while the national government provides teachers' salaries, it does not provide funds for infrastructure development, a lack which has been taken up by mountain travel groups from abroad. Plaques on each of the school's various buildings display the names of donors from Korea, Japan, and the USA.

The fact that these services are mid-level, however, means that students migrate to Khumjung (either every day or staying in on-site dorms) until they finish 10<sup>th</sup> class, at which point all students must go to Kathmandu for further education. Most do not return. Similarly, people with serious medical concerns cannot be dealt with locally and require a trip to the capital. In this way, health and education services as they are today serve more to delay out-migration than to truly counter it.

### *5: Changing Spheres of Movement*

A sphere of movement is simply the places a person goes. It includes paths one travels often and paths which have been significant to travel. Tourism has changed these paths appreciably. One which was briefly mentioned earlier is the change of destination in economic migration. Instead of moving through a high pass to the Ti-

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<sup>3</sup> Hillary tells the story of the construction of these and other buildings in Khumbu, as well as his adventures on Mount Everest, in his book *Schoolhouse in the Clouds* (1964).

betan plateau for trade, the trekking industry takes guides to passes which provide only views, and to locations, like Everest Base Camp, where nothing grows, nothing is made, and no one permanently resides. In addition, guides travel to other regions in Nepal and Tibet which would have likewise held little historical economic value for them.

Aside from work, there has been an increase in Khumjung residents traveling abroad, and the nature of their travel. In many cases, guides or their children have gone to Japan, Australia, or the United States either for leisure travel or for schooling - university or elite mountain training. While certainly not a majority of locals, or even a majority of guides, this trend is in considerable contrast with the pre-tourism, post-trans-Himalayan trade trend of Darjeeling migration from Khumbu, and stand even more starkly against the contemporary reality of thousands of thousands of Nepali labour migrants in India, East Asia, and the Middle East working in construction, security and as domestic labourers (Seddon *et al.*, 2002; Shrestha and Bhandari, 2007). While there remains such emigration from Khumbu (Luger, 2000: 56), it is far from the defining feature in Khumjung that it once was, or that it is in many other areas of Nepal.

Aside from the obvious connection between tourism earnings and the ability to travel internationally, many of the Khumjung residents who travel do so at the invitation, and often with the financial support, of former trekking clients. Engagement in tourism has developed important international connections which have opened the door for both leisure and education migration away from Khumjung (Rogers, 2007: 81).

#### *6: Tourist Presence in Khumjung*

A high percentage of Khumjung's overnight visitors are either acclimatizing slowly on their way up to higher destinations or trying to avoid Namche Bazaar's crowds and noise on their way down. During my three weeks in the village, only one group aside from my own stayed for more than one night, and this was for rest and recovery due to sickness. A majority of visitors, however, do not spend the night in Khumjung, as Namche Bazaar is near enough to attract most trekkers, especially those with pre-arranged schedules, and the major trekking routes actually circumvent the town-site, thus missing many of those without a set agenda.

As could be predicted, tourists in Khumjung, when they do buy, tend towards tourist-oriented consumer goods and services. Lodges are obvious, whether for accommodation or just a meal in their omnipresent wood-heated kitchens. Khumjung has a few shops, selling the usual fare of imported beverages and snack food, as well as a standard souvenir shop selling t-shirts, badges, prayer beads, and new and used books. There is a bakery, an internet café, and a women's knitting group which sells locally made toques, socks, belts and other goods knitted from sheep and yak wool. Spatially, each of these (excepting a small number of the lodges) are situated directly along the main trekking trail through town, and are the spaces most frequented by visitors, with the exception of the Khumjung monastery and its famous yeti scalp display. The bakery in particular is a busy site, crowding every day between noon and sundown.

Compared to other prominent Khumbu villages, Khumjung is not the site of a

great deal of tourist spending, or a great many days of tourist visitation. The result is that Khumjung has relatively few lodges and shops compared to other places, even those with significantly smaller populations. The commercialization of space has not been substantial, a fact which has contributed to the commercialization of mobility and had great ramifications for human movement to and from Khumjung, either as guides or as pack animal herders.

Nonetheless, tourists on any given day represent a substantial proportion of the local population. A one month survey in 1997 showed 1,520 trekkers, 760 guides, 1,033 porters and locals, and 536 pack animals on the Thame trail (Nepal, 2003: 64). Official park entrance data for 1997-1998 showed 18,511 tourists, 20,551 staff, and 2,386 pack animals, while 13,838 additional porters carried imported goods for tourist consumption (Rogers, 2007: 65). While no data is available on the specific number of tourists to Khumjung itself, it is a more popular destination than Thame, and from my observations an estimate of 50 overnight visitors per night in the peak season does not seem unreasonable. In addition to these, both Nepal (2003: 65) and Rogers (2007: 65) estimate the number of tourists to support staff at roughly 1:2. In a village of 160 households, with a high proportion of the men guiding treks, a significant number of men and women herding pack animals, and a large number of schoolchildren studying in Kathmandu, there may be twice as many tourist-related transient individuals on a given night than members of the permanent local population.

## Case Study 2: Sauraha, Chitwan

Chitwan District runs along the southern border in central Nepal. It is within the Tarai belt, characterized traditionally by thick jungle, fertile and level soil, and high numbers of wildlife, including elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, sloth bear and two species of crocodile. Today the region, including Chitwan, is Nepal's manufacturing, transportation, and agricultural leader. It has a monsoon climate, with maximum rains during the hottest season, in September and October. Sauraha sits on the northern edge of the centre of Chitwan National Park, and serves as the park's principle gateway. It is approximately 50 percent ethnic Tharu, with the other half made up of Bahun-Chhetri, Tamang, Rai-Limbu, Gurung, and other migrants from the hills and mountains, echoing the ethnic demographics of the broader district (Guneratne, 2002: 151; Straede and Treue, 2006: 255). Settlements surrounding Sauraha are often identified with specific migrant ethnic groups, and locals point out Tamang and Rai-Limbu settlements nearby. Sauraha itself has a population of fewer than 500 individuals (Kunwar, 2002: 81). It is located on a highway, six kilometres from Tadi Bazaar where the Chitwan highway meets the East-West national highway.

### *History of Mobility*

Though in ways considerably different from Khumbu, human movement has played a significant role in Chitwan as well. Originally inhabited by the malaria-resistant Tharu people, the Tarai was long made uninhabitable to others by thick jungle and epidemic malaria. This was proven by the failure of a series of efforts by Rana-era rulers to resettle hill dwellers in the Tarai in order to boost national revenues (Shrestha, 1989: 376), and resettlement was forced instead to focus on the eastern hills (Bhandari, 2004: 476). A clear and spray campaign funded by USAID in the 1950s made the Tarai "malaria free," a point often noted with pride in Sauraha. Land availability problems caused by divided-inheritance, environmental degradation and overpopulation in the hills and mountains led to new government resettlement initiatives, beginning in the Chitwan Valley in 1954. State efforts met with mixed success, and officials were often accused of nepotism and patronage in the allocation of new lands (Shrestha, 1989: 378), but non-institutional migration has continued. This process has been well documented, as it has played a central role in Nepali politics, economics and identity over the last four decades (Bhandari, 2004; Guneratne, 2002; Shrestha, 1989, 1990; Shrestha and Bhandari, 2007). In the process, the population of the Chitwan valley grew from 42,000 in 1951 to 355,000 in 1991 (Bhandari, 2004: 481). According to Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2005), Chitwan had a population of 472,048 individuals in 2001.

In 1973 the Nepali government expanded the boundaries of an 11-year old wildlife sanctuary and rechristened it Royal Chitwan National Park. 29,000 people were relocated in order to maintain the wilderness, resettled in newly constructed villages on the park's northern boundary (Straede and Treue, 2006: 254). Chitwan also began to receive large numbers of migrants from nearby districts in the Tarai as land and work opportunities presented themselves (Shrestha, 1989: 375), though this coincided with high out-migration, especially to India but with increasing numbers going to the Gulf countries and east and southeast Asia where wage labour opportunities were more abundant (Seddon *et al.*, 2002). This process has been related most strongly to issues of landlessness and near-landlessness (Bhandari, 2004; Shrestha, 1989, 1990).

### *History of Tourism*

Tourism in Chitwan has not received nearly the attention paid to its national counterparts in the Himalayas, particularly the Pokhara-Annapurna and Everest regions. Yet Chitwan actually receives more tourists each year than the Everest region, behind only Pokhara and Kathmandu within Nepal, and has a long history of tourism. Chitwan was long used as a game park by the Rana kings. The monarchs used to take foreign dignitaries to Chitwan for the purpose of improving relations while, I have heard it argued, distracting the colonial empires from the glory and wealth of Kathmandu. The significance of this practice to the Rana government is illustrated by the construction of a hunting lodge in 1939 exclusively for the visit of King George VI - the first concrete building in the entire Tarai (Kunwar, 2002: 83). The practice of dignitaries going game hunting, however, did not survive Indian independence in 1947 and the collapse of the Rana regime in 1950, though Nepalese today are not shy in their accusation that the present prince hunts freely in the national park.

Modern tourism hit Chitwan in 1964 following a series of national tourism initiatives (Rogers, 2007: 38), including the construction of an airstrip near Meghauri in 1961 for the visit of Queen Elizabeth (Kunwar, 2002: 83). 1965 saw the construction of the first commercial lodge, and tourism development has generally followed the pattern set by these early developments: nature-based mass tourism. Indigenous Tharu culture has been commodified in the tourist industry, especially through on-site performances of the traditional stick dance (Kunwar, 2002), and the aforementioned village walk (Guneratne, 2001), while traditional land use has been severely restricted by the national park. In 2000, 117,000 tourists visited Chitwan National Park (UNESCO, 2002: 9), an increase from 836 in 1974 (Kunwar, 2002: 82).

The Maoist conflict became a significant problem in the early 2000s, and Chitwan was in the middle of it. Tourist numbers in the region dropped significantly, especially for foreign visitors. Since the Maoist conflict ended with the signing of an unstable power-sharing agreement in 2007 there has been noticeable recovery in visitation numbers, a reality noted with eagerness by tourism operators in Sauraha. Unfortunately, this too may be threatened by the presently intensifying Madheshi ethnic rights movement in the broader Tarai.

With all of this in mind, five main changes in local population movements have been isolated as a result of tourism: in-migration of a capital class; labour in-migration; outward movement of locals; reduced and higher-status out-migration; and the presence of tourists.

#### *1: Capital Class In-Migration*

As has been documented by many authors in regards to tourist destinations around the world (Namibia in Weaver and Elliot (1996); Mexico in Clancy (2001); Thailand in Cohen (2002)), the big money to be made in tourism is usually made by the already-rich. While in Khumjung this means many people save their wages to invest in a lodge, Sauraha is more open to the immigration of individuals who have earned their money elsewhere and already possess the financial capacity to best take advantage of the tourism industry. While complaints of heat during the summer are common, especially among migrant workers, the climate and geography of Chitwan is much more conducive to immigration than are those of Khumbu. Perhaps more impor-

tantly, there is no shortage of available land around Sauraha, which only has the national park to the south and a small buffer zone to the west on which there are land-use restrictions. Further, there exist no restrictions on hotel building outside the park (Bookbinder *et al.*, 1998: 1404), and land away from the downtown strip remains relatively inexpensive.

Nonetheless, interviews with local restaurant, resort, and store managers and employees revealed that almost every property in the downtown area is owned by an outsider, usually from Pokhara or Kathmandu. The use of these buildings requires, of course, the payment of rent. A 1994 survey of tourism workers in Sauraha supports this observation, reporting that 61 percent of Sauraha's hotels were owned by "non-locals, either Nepalese from outside the Chitwan District or expatriates" (Bookbinder *et al.*, 1998: 1402). This is both recognized and resented locally, and there is a perception that "big bosses" are making "big money" without working, and using that money to educate their sons abroad rather than investing it locally. Indeed, salaries have been found to be higher for those who come from outside than for locals (Kunwar, 2002: 98), and many, if not most, arrangements for tours and excursions happen in Kathmandu. A particularly egregious example of economic leakages because of outside ownership is an inclusive and expansive resort on the outskirts of Sauraha where the staff is unaware of the cost of a room because all arrangements and cash transactions happen in Kathmandu. The owner of this resort is American.

Many of the renters, those who own the shops and their merchandise, are also from other parts of Nepal, having moved to Sauraha to start their businesses. Most come from areas near Pokhara and Kathmandu, where they were able to earn the capital to invest in Sauraha. A common reason for coming to Sauraha is that both Pokhara and Kathmandu are too busy, too competitive, and too expensive.

The majority of this growth occurred during the 1980s when tourism was a big new business opportunity; there were three private hotels before 1980, while 31 were built between that year and 1989 (Bookbinder *et al.*, 1998: 1401). Locals recall that 15 or 20 years ago the village was totally different for not having big buildings housing resorts, shops and restaurants, and in some cases bemoan the impact this commercialization has had on interpersonal relationships and the environment.

## *2: Labour In-Migration*

Sauraha's tourism industry is a seasonal one, characterized by fairly minor increases and decreases in visitation numbers during the dry season, and a near total absence of tourists during the monsoon, when temperatures and floodwaters both reach their peaks. Unlike Khumbu, however, Sauraha's off-season is generally between two and three months, and because it is very much a domestic destination, occasional variations from the expected weather patterns can see a brief deviation in predicted visitation. A dry week during the monsoon, for example, may bring a short rush of Nepali visitors.

Because of this seasonal ebb and flow, there is a dramatic difference in demand for staff during the different seasons. Therefore, during the peak season, restaurants and lodge establishments are likely to have two or three times as many staff as during the monsoon. Others shut down altogether during the rainy season, especially those with properties along the river banks, where floods occasionally rise to their

roofs. In any case, a great number of Sauraha's tourism employees get "holidays" for three months each year, during which time most of them return to their home villages and perform unpaid domestic work.

Bookbinder *et al.* report that as of 1994, almost three quarters of hotel employees were local people, and that an equal proportion of jungle guides "were permanent residents of the Chitwan District and 26% were recent migrants who had moved to the area within the past 5 years from other districts in Nepal and India" (1998: 1402). While it is important that such a high percentage of employees and guides come from Chitwan, being from Chitwan district is not the same as being from Sauraha, and a great majority of tourism employees, with the possible exception of elephant drivers, migrate to Sauraha from outside villages for the tourist season.

Most of this migration is short distance, and in a predominantly rural society "local" is difficult to define by town names alone. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that the presence of tourism in Sauraha is the reason these people, almost all young men, have migrated to town to work.

### *3: Outward Movement of Locals*

With the migration of a capital class primarily to the main Sauraha town-site, many traditional landowners and settlers were given little choice but to move as land prices went up and the feasibility of agriculture declined in an increasingly urban space (see also Kunwar, 2002: 104). Since the land surrounding Sauraha remained and remains relatively inexpensive, and conservationist and geographical barriers have yet to be reached, what may otherwise have been widespread out-migration has expressed itself as a slow outward sprawl - precisely the kind of spatial village expansion impossible in Khumjung - as people, mostly Tharus, move their homesteads outward into rural spaces where they can continue to grow crops and raise livestock. This is graphically evident today, as there is a strong correlation with the size of Tharu landholdings, evidence of livestock rearing and crop production, and their distance from the downtown centre (see also Kunwar, 2002: 104 and Guneratne, 2001). This further contributes to a pre-existing spatially distinguishable social hierarchy through the reformulation of traditional caste hierarchies within (to a degree) the modernist conception of the transcendental individual (Guneratne, 2001).

### *4: Reduced and Higher Status Out-Migration*

Many older men in Sauraha, now working in the tourism industry as guides or restaurateurs, have experiences working abroad in India or Malaysia. For some it was a strategy in their young years to earn more money in one year than they would likely make in five at home in Nepal. For example, one small restaurant owner worked as a watchman in Bombay in 1992, a waterfront cook worked in a restaurant for three years in Malaysia to help support the old man who took him as an orphan, and a shopkeeper spent three years doing computer hardware maintenance in India earning the money to start his business. For others, international labour migration was a security strategy during the worst years of the Maoist conflict in the early 2000s. One lodge safari guide with 16 years experience in Chitwan National Park worked in Kuala Lumpur as a potter for one year in 2004, and another private guide spend "a few years" working in a factory near Delhi to avoid having to make the decision between

army and Maoists. Still others speak of a desire to go abroad, and of the desires of others to do so.

Yet, it is a common perception that relatively few men from Sauraha do go abroad. In his research on tourism in Sauraha, Ramesh Raj Kunwar found that, after graduation, “most [local] students leave their studies and try to get employment in tourism business [...] as it is an easy way of earning for them” (2002: 98). It also seems true that the majority of those who travel cross-border skip over the Indian or Malaysian destinations visited by the older generation (the cheapest and least rewarding of international labour migration), and instead opt for the middle road option of the Middle East (the middle option, above India and Malaysia, but below Western Europe and North America). They are able to do so because of tourism earnings. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are the most commonly cited destinations, and it is always stressed that labour migrants return from those destinations, buy homes, and live more easily than others.

Significantly, however, I never spoke with anyone in Sauraha who had actually gone to the Gulf countries, and no one told me of a close friend or relative who had done so. This is not to doubt that people do practice such labour migration, only to suggest that, given the prominence of the practice in other areas of Nepal, it cannot be as significant to Sauraha as to many other locations. There are other reasons to conclude this as well. For instance, one man estimated there to be 800 working men in Sauraha, and he listed how many worked in each of the resorts. Another predicted that there are nearly 200 safari guides in Sauraha alone. As noted by Kunwar, while these jobs may not pay as well as those in other countries, such steady employment numbers in a town of Sauraha’s size must be working against the trend of international labour migration not only in Sauraha, but in the greater Chitwan District (2002: 103).

##### *5: Tourist Presence in Sauraha*

The most commented on feature of Sauraha’s tourism during interviews was that it has been struggling since the Maoist conflict reached crisis level, and despite a considerably better year in 2007, the industry has yet to fully recover. This has been particularly true of international travelers who have become increasingly concentrated in the mountains, a fact with particular significance since it is the international tourists who spend the most time and money in Sauraha when they do visit.

Instead, assisted by the presence of good roads between the town and Nepal’s major centres, Sauraha is characterized by a steady and heavy flow of domestic visitors, most of whom come for the day, some of whom may spend one night, but very few of whom stay any longer than that. Indeed, every day during my stay in Sauraha there were bus loads of Nepali students and small families in buses, cars, and on motorbikes. Nearly all of these were spending the day by the river or at the picnic area near the Elephant Breeding Centre. These visitors seldom buy many goods or pay for many services, and thus are not the type most desired by local businesses. As mentioned previously, but baring mention again, this access to the domestic tourism market makes Sauraha flexible to seasonal weather variations in a way that international-dependent destinations are not because of their need for pre-arrangement.

Nonetheless, even with this access to the domestic market, it is clear that the

big money in Sauraha tourism remains with the foreign visitors. Resorts, restaurants and shops cater to foreign tastes (again, the usual shop fare of foreign packaged foods and souvenirs), and business people complain about the shortage of foreign visitors even as they complain about the presence of screaming schoolchildren entering the town on the roofs of buses.

Foreign tourism in Sauraha is characterized by a resort and safari mentality. This involves an emphasis on the hotel, where visitors spend a great deal of their time and consume much of what they will in the town, as well as pre-arranged tour packages like elephant rides, elephant bathing, jungle walks, cultural dance programs, village walks, and canoe rides. The great majority of tourists visible in Sauraha are engaged in pre-arranged activities rather than exploring without an agenda. The effect of this is an emphasis on inclusiveness within the industry, the capacity of a resort to provide anything and everything a visitor desires. There is little room for the few independent craft sellers who visit occasionally to sell their wares to tourists.

There is a commercialization of space because of the demand for resorts, though this is countered by the wide availability of land relative to demand everywhere excepting the downtown strip. There is also the commercialization of mobility for safari guides, though most jungle walks are only for the day, and very few run more than a few days. Jungle safaris are certainly not competing with mountain trekking in respect to commercialization of mobility, though tourist demand for domesticated elephants has made them increasingly abundant around town, similar to the proliferation of the *dzokia* in Khumjung.

Like Khumjung, Sauraha's population is overwhelmed by tourists. Kunwar claims that 23,000 tourists visited Sauraha in 1992, of roughly 65,000 visitors to the national park (2002: 82). This represents 35 percent of park visitors. With 117,000 visitors to the park in 2000, the same ratio equates to 41,400 tourists in Sauraha. Considering the increased concentration of hotels and other tourist services in Sauraha over the last two decades, this estimate should be considered low. In a nine month tourist season, this represents an average of 153 tourists each day in a village of fewer than 500.

## Discussion

All of these alterations of human movement contribute to two locally adapted versions of modernity, in the vein of Stacy Leigh Pigg, Arjun Guneratne, and others. They are instances of local populations interacting with forces beyond the local, and interpreting those forces according to local standards. They depend on and affect local circumstances, including culture, environment, and economics. While there are big differences in the ways Khumjung and Sauraha affect and are affected by tourism, migration, and modernity, what they share is the experience of a disrupted understanding of local through the instigation of mobility. What is most significant in this regard, because it is universal to destinations, is the tourist population.

Tourists come and go quickly, spending little time in any single location and participating little in the life of the community therein. The case studies illustrate how tourism's temporariness contributes to further fluidity in the destination. Not only are tourists themselves in a location only briefly, but tourism tends also to utilize seasonal and mobile labour, and to create new connections that alter peoples' spheres of movement. With this knowledge it is easy to view tourism definitively in terms of its temporariness and indeed, this temporariness has important cultural, economic, and environmental implications which ought to be thoroughly investigated. However, it is important also to recognize that while the individual visitor stays only a short time, the tourist class is constantly regenerating itself in a single location. As Andrea Louie (2003) notes, "the regular arrival of visitors becomes a routine part of the local culture and economy" (739), thus creating in certain ways the impression of a permanent immigrant class, though one with unique interactions with local land and community that set tourism apart as a migration form.

Tourists require the permanent construction of accommodations and spaces of leisure that are explicitly distinct from others in the community. They increase demand on land and productivity, while at the same time decreasing available land and converting productive properties into consumptive ones. Tourists represent a locally-defined upper class since they are almost always wealthier than locals and, even when this is not the case, they create the economic impression of such by assuming a purely consumptive role. Perhaps most disconcerting, the tourist class essentially does not change. Cross-cultural interaction is a process of exchange and compromise, theoretically leading to a shared middle ground. Tourists, by individually cycling, adapt little to local culture, and are quickly replaced by new individuals who are equally ill-adapted. Effectively, the permanently transient touristic class is also a stubborn one, and in its consistency demands greater change on behalf of local people. This is in addition to manual labourers in home-stay, schoolchildren in dorms, service providers in lodge accommodations, and transient tourist support staff, and cumulatively adds up to an enormous number of non-locals affecting the constitution of the local.

## Conclusion

On my second trip to Khumjung I arrived just as the sun was setting, back-lighting the always photogenic Mount Ama Dablam with a surreal royal purple. I entered through neighbouring Khunde, and as I was walking down the trail between the two villages I ran into a Sherpa man in his mid 20s, wearing a down jacket and walking alone towards Khumjung - a truly rare encounter during the peak trekking season when young men are seldom in these villages except when guiding a trekking group through them. The man was a trekking guide, in town for the night and leaving the following morning for work. When I asked where he was from he smiled and proudly said, "I am from here, in Khunde, born and raised." The way he said it was exactly the way I always responded to the same question in my home - a popular tourist destination in the Canadian Rockies - as if needing to differentiate between the people who had come for work or leisure, and myself who had been born there and thus deserved to be recognized as a "true local." It is a reaction I have seen repeated in tourist locations everywhere I have gone.

The significance of this illustration is the imperative to identify not only as local, but as *more* local than a present group of others, even while economically engaged with those others. It is easy to pass this reaction off as pride in being able to claim something that others desire, but there is more to this reaction that deserves consideration. In the context of tourism's de facto modernizing agenda which plays out as a negotiated process between local and global forces, I contend that it is a natural response to a sense of displacement, if not in terms of land than in terms of ownership of local culture, of how the local will represent itself in its negotiations with those global forces. I take the position here that this dislocation is the likely result of touristic population movements and resultant demographic and perspective shifts, as illustrated in their variance by Khumjung and Sauraha. Dean MacCannell (1992) writes that with tourism, "the primary function of the village shifts from being the base of human relationships to a detail in the recreational experiences of a tourist from out of town" (176). While it must be understood that this transformation is a matter of degree, it is important to recognize the shift from a definition of the local that belongs to local people (human relationships) who possess a complex and multi-faceted relationship with the land and society, to one which belongs increasingly to someone else (a detail in recreational experiences) whose relationship with the place is consumptive. Importantly, both of these definitions come from the inside; they are both local perspectives.

The research at hand is insufficient to make conclusions about what effect an altered local perspective has on tourism and development - to do so would be presumptive reductionism - nor do I wish to correlate local with traditional or non-local with modern. Instead, it is my hope that what emerges is recognition that the very presence of tourism changes what constitutes local, and that this necessarily affects how the local interprets and integrates modernity. With this as a basis it may be possible to develop more accurate understandings of how and why tourism has the cultural, environmental, and economic impacts that it does, and from there reconsider the place of tourism in development planning.

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Other important technological changes emerged in the second half of the 20th century and they were related to the development of telecommunication and information technologies. In fact, new telecommunication and information technologies have changed tourism industry consistently. Instead, the development of modern telecommunications, including mobile phones and information technologies, including Internet, has eliminated physical boundaries between countries and places making them available to masses of tourists. In such a way, tourists could not be just informed about potential destinations, but they could travel to any place in the world and maintain communication with their friends, relatives and others by means of modern telecommunication systems.

4. The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council.
5. National occupational standards and certification.
6. HTNCareerNet.com.

Nowadays we hear more about European research into early identification of skill needs but this is still fairly limited and mostly concentrated in specific sectors, trades and occupations characterised by internationalisation, where the mobility of people, jobs and services are high. Tourism is one such sector.

A case study. Katja Gottwik. Barrier-free tourism for all: the need for know-how. Gender inequality in Nepal refers to disparities and inequalities between men and women in Nepal, a landlocked country in South Asia. Gender inequality is defined as unequal treatment and opportunities due to perceived differences based solely on issues of gender. Gender inequality is a major barrier for human development worldwide as gender is a determinant for the basis of discrimination in various spheres such as health, education, political representation, and labor markets. Although Nepal is