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Anthropological Perspectives on Local Development

Knowledge and Sentiments in Conflict

Edited by
Simone Abram and Jacqueline Waldren

ROUTLEDGE

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Anthropological Perspectives on Local Development

This collection shifts the focus away from the wealth of published material which analyses large-scale, international development plans and policies to examine the conflicts and realities of development at a local, experiential level. It provides a series of case studies which illuminate the attitudes and actions of all those involved in local development schemes.

The material is drawn from Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. All the contributors use rigorous anthropological methods of analysis to shed light on the place of personal sentiment and identity in reactions to planned development schemes. In a world where direct action and public protest are routine responses to local development schemes, they show how protesters, developers and politicians often hold very different fundamental views about the environment, society, government and development which go beyond partisan economic and political interests.

This collection provides a valuable comparative perspective on the context of development, and makes enlightening reading for social anthropologists, planners, development workers and specialists in development studies.

Simone Abram is a Research Fellow at the University of Cardiff. **Jacqueline Waldren** is a Research Associate at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women and a Lecturer-Tutor at Oxford University.

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London and New York

First published 1998
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-45102-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-45702-1 (Adobe eReader Format)
ISBN 0-415-18277-8 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-18278-6 (pbk)

Contents

List of contributors vii
Preface ix

1 **Introduction: anthropological perspectives on local development** **1**
SIMONE ABRAM

2 **Discourses on development in Malaysia** **18**
ANNE KATHRINE LARSEN

3 **Sex for leisure: modernity among female bar workers in Tanzania** **36**
AUD TALLE

4 **State vs. locality: the new Slovene—Croat state border in the Upper Kolpa valley** **55**
DUŠKA KNEŽEVIC

5 **From economism to culturalism: the social and cultural construction of risk in the River Esera (Spain)** **75**
GASPAR MAIRAL BUIL AND JOSÉ ANGEL BERGUA

6 Contested space: planners, tourists, developers and environmentalists in Malta **96**

JEREMY BOISSEVAIN AND NADIA THEUMA

7 The road to ruin: the politics of development in the Balearic Islands **120**

JACQUELINE WALDREN

8 When opposite worldviews attract: a case of tourism and local development in Southern France **141**

CHRISTIAN LINDKNUD

Index 160

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Preface

The chapters collected in this volume were first presented in a workshop at the 1996 EASA Conference in Barcelona. The workshop organisers (Jacqueline Waldren and myself) had become increasingly concerned with the scant attention paid by anthropologists to the forms that development takes in the so-called 'developed' or 'industrialised' nations. This concern grew out of our discussions following my own experiences of studying planning in England, and finding that few anthropologists had gone before me, and even fewer had published ethnographic work on the subject, although notable work had been done in the USA: for example, Lisa Peattie at MIT and Janet Abu-Lugod in New York. The role of notions of development, identities and sentiments as a normalised part of local governance had become a central issue to our work on both tourism and local government planning over the past few years, and the opportunity to compare this with other anthropologists' understandings of different development contexts was offered by the conference. The aim of the workshop was to reconsider the differentiated, local notions of development being used in routine state-governed development, in contrast to international aid-sponsored development.

Authors were invited to address questions of sentiment, identity, citizenship, governance and power, to analyse how and why governing agencies often appear to act in conflict with the interests of their constituents. Underlying discrepancies between the disputing parties' concepts of environmental, economic and cultural conservation and development, and the beliefs that uphold these ideologies, were brought into play within conflicts over the power of state agencies to determine local futures. The resulting collection takes a critical anthropological approach to forms of 'development' as they are experienced in contemporary localities.

We should like to offer our particular thanks to workshop participants whose contributions could not be included in the final volume. The enthusiastic response of applicants to the workshop, we think, reflects the importance of the study of protest and power in the governance of development, but also shows how anthropologists can contribute to this study through examining the conflicting meanings of common terms involved.

Further thanks go to the conference organisers in Barcelona, the series editor, Jon Mitchell, and the EASA committee. We should also like to thank colleagues for their advice, including Tamara Kohn and Jon Murdoch. The University of Cardiff made available facilities used in the preparation of this book.

SAA
Cardiff, 1998

Chapter 1

Introduction

Anthropological perspectives on local development

Simone Abram

The relationship between anthropology and development is complex and problematic, and has largely been dominated by a focus on international development and a critique of the model of the 'developed West' providing the aspirational ideal for the 'poor Third World'. Gardner and Lewis (1996), for instance, offer an excellent review. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the 'development' efforts made by states within their own territories, and the varying forms of local governance of that development. Criticism of the use of 'Western' discourses of development to force dependency on poor countries has generally ignored the domestic use of these same discourses and the practices institutionalised within these 'Western' states (Cowen and Shenton 1995:41–2). While calls for anthropologies of development institutions have been common for much of the 1990s, anthropologies of local state institutions have generally focused on issues of access to public services (e.g. Edwards 1994; McCourt Perring 1994) and examinations of the organisation of local development are still few.

The rise of 'environmental' issues in the late twentieth century has led many citizens of 'Western' states to re-examine their own relationship with development ideologies, and although state responses to public concern have been partial and constrained (see Grove-White 1993), domestic planning has become the focus of a great deal of public demonstration and protest. This has been particularly the case in the UK, where unpopular central government decisions on the development of new by-pass roads and massive expansions of rural housing have provoked a broad-based backlash against domestic development and planning. Public protest has expanded rapidly since the rise in environmental and conservation groups in the late 1970s (see Lowe and Goyder 1983), with self-styled eco-warriors and environmental activists commanding widespread support (see Waldren, this volume: note 8). What this volume indicates is the way this sort of environmental protest is intimately related to differing notions not only of development, but of environment, ‘identities’ and ‘sentiments’ and to the forms of local government.

The chapters presented here all represent an attempt to refocus anthropological studies on such local development issues, and on conflicts of interest engendered by local economic and, perhaps more commonly, infrastructural development (the two perhaps being linked in a rather less causal relationship than economists would largely admit). These encounters are then related to the identities and sentiments of residents of particular localities, general pressure groups and the agents of development. Our view is not limited to ‘Western’ countries, however, and the two chapters that examine the differentiated notions of development held in Malaysia and Kenya, respectively, set the critical context for our consideration of development. The following chapter, on the transformation of a new state border between Croatia and Slovenia, reminds us that ‘development’ can take more abstract political forms, but the relation of the citizens to the state’s decision-making process often follows the patterns found in other development processes. Mairal Buil and Bergua’s account of development conflict in Spain analyses current trends for ‘participative development’, showing the problematic gaps between such aspirations and continued practice by tracing the roles of cultural and economic argument. The following three Mediterranean cases share a common feature in that they all refer to tourism. This need cause no surprise, since tourism is now one of the world’s most common means of economic development, as well as a spur to development in economically dependent areas. Tourism has been a major factor in development in all of the areas considered in this volume: the Maasai’s involvement in tourism, for example, has been one of the most famous ‘cases’ studied in the anthropology of tourism (e.g. Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994). The three Mediterranean cases reflect the impact of tourism on economic, social and political development.

The following sections of this introduction consider first the directions of anthropologies of development, then address the relationships between governance, democracy, development and sentiment.

Anthropologies of planned development

The anthropology of development has long suffered from the co-option of development studies as an ‘applied’ subject, separate from its theoretical academic sibling. The absurdity of this distinction in a discipline which prides itself on its close relationship to the world, in contrast to ‘armchair theorists’, also belies the wealth of theoretical anthropological approaches to development and policy studies. Wright’s account of the concerns arising from anthropological studies of ‘policy’ indicate the extent to which the old duality of ‘pure’ versus ‘applied’ anthropology has proved itself increasingly inappropriate to contemporary anthropology (1995). She highlights new work that advances ‘analyses of political discourse and policy change’ through the study of ‘political processes of transformation of dominant ideologies in Western and Third World countries’ (ibid.: 84–5). Unfortunately, however, anthropological analyses of the planning activities of local governmental authorities seem still to be in surprisingly short supply, despite the wealth of literature concerning international planned development, a lacuna this volume helps to address.

A number of stances have been adopted by anthropologists of development in the latter half of the twentieth century, of which two in particular stand out as relevant to this collection. First, a recurrent theme has been the analysis of development planning as an exercise in rationality, and its implementation as a form of symbolic interaction between bureaucracies and ‘beneficiaries’. Second, the analysis of development rationality as a particular dominating product of a ‘Western’ ideology (exemplified in Escobar 1991) has provided the basis for a critique of development as a discourse. Both these approaches are concerned with imbalances of power between the parties involved in ‘development’, and both have tended to concentrate on the relationships between donors and recipients of international aid, on the various scales of nations, states or ‘projects’. However, in this collection, we shift the focus away from international aid, towards the organisation of development by either municipal or national governments for their own citizens.

Robertson’s analysis (1984) of planning as an institution offers one point of intersection between these two fields. Robertson sets out a view of planning as the exercise of human rationality, a form of control over people’s personal and collective daily lives, and from this perspective planned development can be seen as an extension of daily activities onto a broader, more strategic scale. As he traces the history of planning, he reaches a number of conclusions about the forms it usually takes. He describes it as a normative activity that depends on various techniques and symbolic systems to come to terms with the uncertain future, involving the translation of ideas into concrete activities (ibid.: 3–4). As a national exercise, planning development becomes a site of contest between people and officials of the state, whereby the state ‘attempts to organise the mass, to change an undifferentiated and unreliable citizenry into a structured, readily accessible public’ (Selznick 1949); from this view, planning systems are revealed to be exercises in the power of the state.

However, Robertson recognises that differences over plans do not only arise over differences in political interests, but also over epistemology, representing ‘divergent views of the meaning of planning itself and of the ideal worlds which “development” proposes’ (Robertson 1984:4). De Vries elaborates this level of epistemological difference in his critique of views of development bureaucracy that discuss ‘what “development” means to ordinary people, not only as a set of interrelated concepts, signs or rhetorics, but also as a metaphor which represents the endeavours, aspirations, frustrations of various sorts of social actors such as planners, politicians, farmers and entrepreneurs’ (1995:41). The epistemological line in the anthropology of development directs anthropologists to enquire into the meaning of ‘development’ and ‘planning’ as further elements to understanding situations of conflict, going beyond the analysis of political interests. It is through this enquiry that sentiments and identity processes can be incorporated into the analysis of planned development as a metaphor for a wide range of different beliefs about the social, political and physical environment. These epistemologies must then be brought back into the political analysis of planning by considering the accessibility of the planning process to the different participants’ discourses and the relative difficulties of reconciling the different beliefs.

Only through the analysis of both the epistemology and the politics of development together is it possible to think ‘beyond’ the discourse of development, as Escobar urges us to do (1995). It is not enough to recognise the colonising effects of development discourses as the construction of a ‘Third World’, since, for the colonisers, ‘overseas development’ is only one manifestation of a much broader and more generalised approach to governance through which the state seeks to plan and control the future. Other manifestations include routine local planning, the construction of particular built environments (roads, hotels, houses) and also the control of administrative and national borders. The analysis of the discourse of development applies equally well to ‘aid’, ‘development’, ‘local development’ and ‘local government’, and represents the constant struggle between state control of a constructed ‘citizenry’ or ‘public’, and the ‘good citizen’s’ role in maintaining democracy through active participation in democratic structures. If we recognise that development is one manifestation of particular ideologies which are enacted through forms of governance, we can begin to question the ideologies themselves. However, Escobar's tendency to reduce all forms of international development to the expression of a single 'modernity' belies the differentiation between the agents of development, and perhaps mistakes the pursuit of consumer capitalism for differentiated efforts to counter 'structural' imbalances of power and capital. Through this volume, we attempt to redifferentiate not only the metaphors of development employed by social groups who resist development, but also those of the developers. Thus, by considering the meanings of 'development', 'democracy' and 'government' held by different parties to particular conflicts, we reveal not only local variation, but the differentiation between governmental and international agencies of development.

In the following sections, I consider three main elements to the analysis of local planned development: the activity of development planning as a form of governance and the role of participation within it; changes to notions of development that have arisen in relation to the popularisation of environmentalism; and their implications for changing and differentiated notions of governance and democracy.

Development as politics: state control versus participation

The balance of power between the different actors in planned development is complex, and this complexity is exacerbated by the use of varying levels and styles of 'participation'. The forms and effectiveness of 'participation' are so variable that the term actually denotes few specific practices, indicating only the notion of 'efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control' (Doorman 1995). Doorman identifies two schools of thought on participation: 'social planning', where participation is used to facilitate development efforts initiated by outside agencies, and 'social action', where participation is a moral obligation leading to empowerment of the participants (ibid.: 129). However, in each approach naive views of the process, as one in which communities make concerted efforts to reach shared interests, give way to the realisation that development is more commonly a struggle for scarce resources, through which existing internal power relations are often reproduced allowing local elites to gain the most benefits (ibid.: 131). On the national scale, Robertson notes also that while participation appears to be an act of faith on the part of the state in the participants' compliance, the success of national development plans depends on a significant degree of state control (ibid.: 129). Therefore, the very notion of participation implies a contradiction since all state participative development is based on a compromise between the state's goals and the citizens' aspirations.

Furthermore, if we define knowledge as ways of construing the world, rather than the simple accruing of facts, then we can see that participation in development must involve the meeting of different forms of knowledge. Once alternative rationalities have been translated into existing policy discourses, then, as systems of knowledge, they must also be transformed. The problem for subordinated forms of knowledge is that once translated into the dominant (usually 'scientific' or 'technical') discourse, alternative rationalities, arguments and thoughts may lose their original force. Arce and Long thus press us to examine the interfaces between these forms of knowledge, without making ontological distinctions, 'for example between so-called "scientific" as opposed to "everyday" knowledge, or between bureaucratic and local knowledge systems' (Arce and Long 1987:7).

Adopting this perspective allows us to see that, where participative development has at times been advocated as the panacea for the failures of earlier state- or donor-imposed projects, the limits to this participation have usually been within the parameters set by the project initiators. Thus, when the subjects of development object to the assumptions and notions held by the developers, their objections are usually ruled out unless they can translate them into the terms set by the developers. The difficulties for 'ordinary people', or non-professional citizens, in accessing technical discourses is often identified as a major barrier to full participation, so that authors such as Doorman call for universal education as the key to empowerment (ibid.: 142). However, these forms of translation are problematic even for the most highly educated of citizens, as they represent the power of the state to retain control over its aims. By insisting that all citizens or lobbyists conform to the discourses of the arguments as set out by the state, alternative rationalities are effectively excluded from influencing policies.

The compromise between the participation of the beneficiaries of development (or the citizens of a state) and the state's desire to exert control over development processes and outcomes varies, of course, between different forms of regulation. For instance, the land-use planning system of England and Wales, a system that has provided the model for many other planning systems, shows quite clearly the difficulties of reconciling the widely different interests of those subject to plans to the tightly constrained policy decisions that must be made (Abram *et al.* 1996). In this example, one is left to wonder whether increased participation in local planning will either clarify any ‘public good’, lead to any consensus or, potentially, lead to further conflicts between those with different interests and perceptions through the recognition of diversity of opinions. From this perspective, it is not at all clear whether increased participation or ‘collaborative planning’ is actually likely to offer ‘better’ policies or planning decisions, especially for as long as participation relies on a notion of homogenous ‘communities’ susceptible to singular ‘representation’ (see Wright 1995:73–4).

Land-use planning is a system of control over built development that separates out decisions on what may be built, and where, from other development decisions. In England and Wales, this system is formalised in a series of government Acts and sets of guidance notes on good practice. The peculiarity of this particular system is that it attempts to guide decisions over whether particular buildings should be constructed at certain sites according to a tightly limited set of factors. This set of factors includes economic and physical geographic indicators, but excludes many social and aesthetic notions, so that housing, for example, may be built according to the statistical forecasts of housing need set out by the central government bureaucracy, and can be situated where it is economically and physically feasible, but the aesthetics of buildings can only be prescribed in nominated special areas, and economic indicators take priority over social or aesthetic criteria. Furthermore, although new building is now allocated according to comprehensive forward plans for municipalities and regions, new housing estates can be approved with only the minimum reference to the provision of services such as health and education, or water and power, services which are effectively subordinate to the provision of housing. While public consultation forms part of the preparation of plans at all but the central level, the ability of ‘ordinary people’ to influence the policies included in plans is limited.

At the higher levels, individuals or pressure groups can be played off against each other so that, for example, the housing forecasts of the house-builders and the protectionism lobbies are taken as two extremes that allow the government legitimately to adopt a position between the two.

More significantly, non-professionals can be excluded through the use of self-referential technical discourses. For example, the use of sophisticated statistical models requiring extensive electronic support is not accessible to non-professional participants (the computer statistical models used in strategic plans in England are held by government authorities, and in universities who are employed as consultants by developers), yet these are the only forms of evidence deemed valid to argue effectively over the numbers of houses to be built in particular regions. The arguments of pressure groups that, for example, trends change, and projecting past trends is inevitably a mistaken enterprise, can thus be dismissed by government authorities as insufficiently technical—and, by implication, too emotional. Thus, attempts by some groups to develop 'bottom-up' assessments of local needs are excluded, as the centralised statistical formulae set the bench mark for 'the public interest'. At the more local levels, strategic goals, such as these numbers of houses, become fixed through a hierarchical distribution of numbers that 'cascade' down from central through regional to local government, so at the local planning stage, arguments over numbers of houses become futile. It is already 'too late' for local groups to argue that particular numbers of houses in their area are either insufficient or exaggerated. Allocations of housing development are thus displaced by arguments over housing distribution, so that different localities are often pitted against one another for preferable solutions. Thus, at the local level, the 'strategic line' of state control takes precedence over local solutions to planning for future development (see Murdoch and Abram 1998; Abram *et al.* 1996), and there is no possibility for people to reject development altogether. Therefore, development per se is always assumed, and negotiation only touches on its location, and some aspects of its design.

The separation of emotions or sentiments from the 'technicalities' of government typifies state planning activities that attempt to de-politicise development decisions. The rise of direct action in Britain reflects, to some extent, the exclusivity of this process, and the inability of even well-resourced, determined pressure groups to gain significant influence over decision-making processes. However, these processes are coming under increasing pressure. In the above example, UK environmental pressure groups are currently joining forces with local residents' associations, parish councils (the most local form of government in Britain) and direct-activists to counter this development policy process and its destructive environmental consequences, a coalition that is making front-page headlines (Schoon 1998). This situation is presenting an increasingly stark set of choices to the state in the UK. The democratic state is founded on the notion of continuous economic growth, but now faces democratic calls for the conservation of resources, and it is becoming apparent that these two goals may be incompatible. The struggles to accommodate these divergent requirements are represented in this volume in the chapters by Waldren, Mairal Buil and Bergua, and Boissevain and Theuma, as well as Lindknud. These studies demonstrate how exclusionary processes are played out with broad-ranging effects, and indicate the political and environmental consequences of conflicts of identity, sentiment and interests.

Development, modernisation and environmentalism

This conflict between the strategic aims and goals of the state and the varied interests of citizens has become the focus of increased activity, particularly in Europe, and has been exacerbated by a number of factors, including a greater public awareness of human rights issues, the internationalisation of communications and environmentalism, of which I will consider only the latter here. The rise of popular environmentalism, aided by a revolution in international communications technologies, has been accompanied by a move to the mainstream of once extremist activists. Pressure groups, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, have become central players in international environmental politics (as the Brent Spar oil platform episode displayed—see Beck 1996:18–19), and Green politics, as both local activity and party politics, have been played out through increased public demonstration throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The political success of environmental pressure groups lies in their ability to utilise scientific methods and discourses to translate their sentiments about behaviour into the political mainstream, just as Schumacher translated sentiment back into economics (1973). When inaccuracies were found in the scientific data used to argue that the Brent Spar North Sea oil platform be decommissioned inshore rather than dumped at sea, the credibility of Greenpeace and its supporters was damaged, but by then they had already demonstrated their power through their ability to mobilise large numbers of the population to boycott petrol stations, influencing politicians, particularly from Northern Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia). Thus, the power of non-state agencies often lies with their grasp of the techniques adopted by the state—that is, with access to knowledge as much as to any other resources.

The rise in environmental protest mirrors a change in political activism that has been happening across Europe, as well as around the globe. But as Prato (1993) and Pearce (1993) show, environmental protest also challenges a particular concept of state capitalism, and encapsulates critical alternative understandings of what it is to be 'developed' and what forms the process of 'development' should take. Thus, new protests against inappropriate technologies have found their way back into the anthropology of the 'West', and enable us to reconsider the clashes of development 'fashions' for dams, roads and forest-clearing etc., as differences in development ideology within 'Western' and other states, rather than only as elements in the neo-colonial domination of 'poor' countries (see the chapters by Mairal and Bergua, Waldren, Larsen).

The shift to environmentalism also suggests changing approaches to nature and primitivism. Where once non-industrial people were considered backward by the 'West', and nomads were encouraged to settle and join capitalist consumerism, their attempts to 'modernise' are now often seen in the West as anti-environmentalism. Larsen and Talle demonstrate the pressures on groups to conform to national pressures for 'modernisation' in countries subject to high development pressures. Europe has always had its own 'less developed' areas, although many of the agricultural areas that were until recently categorised as so 'backward' that they had not encompassed biochemical agricultural processes have since emerged as home to 'organic farmers' (Abram 1996:180). However, the continued persecution of travellers and Romanies throughout Europe should leave us in no doubt that 'modernisation' still implies the settling of nomads and their incorporation into Western consumer capitalism, just as organic farming has redefined the poor smallholder into a category that can be incorporated into the global supermarket food chain.

The role of environmentalism as anti-development activism has been tempered by the notion of 'sustainable development', which attempts to reign the potential anarchism of environmentalism into the realm of capitalist development. Whilst the argument for sustainable development is expressed, through the Bruntland formulation, in terms of the meeting of current needs without compromising the future (WCED 1987), in practice it is cited in defence of continued growth in the use of resources. In the UK, the 'sustainable development' argument is used at local planning levels to argue both for the construction of new houses in rural areas near railway stations or other public transport nodes (theoretically to reduce the use of private cars), and to argue against construction on ‘green fields’. Consequently, the ‘sustainable development’ principle is frequently used to argue directly opposing stances, effectively skewing the environmental argument and lessening its impact. It also obscures long-standing arguments in housing planning over the relationship between generalised ‘need’ and ‘demand’ for specific forms and locations, which appear in a new guise translated into a rhetoric of ‘sustainability’. Thus, where environmentalism presents itself as a threat to the established capitalist notion of development as permanent growth, the state has attempted to re-route environmental arguments through the discourse of sustainability. Once again, where citizens then engage with the state’s discourse, they find themselves implicated in a logic which is not their own, and which diverts their own intentions. As Mairal Buil and Bergua put it (this volume), the cultural arguments of local resistance are forced through an ‘argumentative detour’ to adopt the state’s framework of logic as a strategy for reaching a favourable decision. The power of development agents (agencies or companies) lies with their access to the resources not only of wealth, but of governmental rationalities and the ability to mobilise these rationalities in their favour. Here, we come full circle to the issue of democracy and the access of different actors to the procedures of decision-making.

Governance and democracy

As we re-examine development as a factor of governance, a debate also opens up over forms of democracy. If, as Robertson suggests, all efforts to defer to the public are predicated on various understandings of the meaning of democracy (Robertson 1984:137), the rise in antagonism to national and local planned development suggests that not only different meanings of development are at stake but different meanings of democracy. Increasingly, British commentators are explaining the rise in environmental protest against government-sponsored development projects (such as roads and new housing distributions) as a response to failings in the basic operation of representative democracy. When people fail to shift established sets of political and economic interests through participation in the ‘normal’, legal, predominantly discursive methods, then they are likely to turn to physical, bodily resistance. If a state is then prepared to battle with its own citizens, it risks becoming an oppressive regime, and ceasing to be an inclusive democracy. The British Conservative government’s decisions in the mid–1990s, for example, to defend the use of private security firms in order to clear contested sites of Special Scientific Interest of people it dismissed as 'New Age' protesters so as to allow the construction of new roads, led to the conservative middle classes joining in the protests, severely undermining the government's legitimacy.

Conflicts of interest over even individual development projects can all too easily threaten to destabilise states, throwing up moral questions over human rights and environmental futures that undermine technical-rational discourses of economic and industrial development, as shown by Mairal Buil and Bergua, Boissevain and Theuma, and Waldren. Thus the meanings of development and of democracy have complex interconnections. A democratic state may attempt to constitute a well-behaved public through certain forms of development, or it may 'make-up' orderly citizens by fitting individuals into statistical schemata (Hacking 1990:3), in order to carry out development, but such processes may be disrupted if the meanings of development or democracy are at odds with those held by the citizen-subjects of policies. Prato demonstrates how a project to construct a power station in Apulia escalated into a dispute over the moral and political status of decision-making, and a challenge to capitalist rationality, incorporating the moral stance of the church. Where representative politicians saw the power station as a benefit to the local economy, local groups resisted both the desecration of a beautiful stretch of coastline and the displacement of local sharecroppers, a dispute that incorporated resistance to 'technically rational control' and the party system (Prato 1993). However, Prato's analysis of the discourses employed by those who resisted industrial capitalism shows that as the protest groups institutionalised their protest, 'they became part of that system, in obvious contradiction of their essence as the (existential) representatives of a new political symbolism'. Thus, it became obvious that their political discourse also remained embedded in the logic of 'technical control' (ibid.: 185). The parallels here with the discourses of 'Third World Development' are unavoidable; Escobar's perspective on development discourse could easily be describing these same processes:

> Third world reality is inscribed with precision and persistence by the discourses and practices of economists, planners, nutritionists, demographers and the like, making it difficult for people to define their own interest in their own terms—in many cases actually disabling them from doing so.
>
> (1995:214)

This is precisely the problem that 'participative' planning aimed to address, but simultaneously succumbed to, and it is the factor that is problematic to current discourses on 'collaborative planning' in the UK (see Healey 1997). The notion of development is so implicit for the practitioners that to refuse development becomes a kind of sin. So much so, that all collaborative projects stall at the unthinkable, that the participants may not want development. This has, in fact, been one of the major stumbling blocks in British development, certainly in this decade, as residents living in rural areas (particularly those more 'picturesque' regions within commuting distance of major urban centres) have taken up the invitation to participate in forward planning in order to try to prevent further development from taking place. It is not surprising, however, that in the face of governmental strategies, people have quickly invented resourceful means of resistance (see Reed-Danahay 1993). Newman gives us the example of objectors to planning development in France, who, apparently, have made use of the codified legal and administrative context, adopting a strategy:

> [N]ot so much to argue the substantive case against a proposed development but to check whether planning procedures have been correctly followed. If any procedural lapses can be discovered, then the project can be challenged in the administrative court and any further planning or development works suspended.
>
> (Newman 1994:220)

Thus, very much as in Britain, and increasingly in many other administrations, despite the best efforts of a planning system designed specifically to make centralised pro-development political decisions operational at the local level by making them appear merely 'administrative', local objectors have found myriad methods of resistance, as each of the chapters in this volume illustrates. However, these examples also show how states, too, find ways, subtle or robust, to resist calls for democracy. In each case, the risks are high: at best, either the local groups have to live with unwanted development, or the politicians (and sometimes bureaucrats) are rooted out.

Conclusions and chapters in this volume

Despite the best attempts by state bureaucracies to de-politicise arguments over development by converting planning decisions into routine administrative exercises, increasingly widespread local protest has forced the political back onto the agenda. Whether it be through arguments of environmentalism or humanitarianism, the sentiments of protesters are challenging the techno-rationalist arguments of developers. Consequently, the requirements on the state to provide certain types of development to further economic growth are becoming incompatible with its democratic duty to respond to calls for the protection of resources (environmental, social and economic). Simplistic, if well-meaning, attempts to increase public participation in state development policy formulation have generally assumed homogeneity of interests, but have also assumed shared notions of development itself among the participants. This volume re-introduces the sentiments and identities that have been so systematically excluded from development planning policies, in order to question the assumptions made about development and protest. Thus, the anthropological perspective re-introduces the heterogeneity of belief and opinion within negotiations and struggles over development, and brings us to a position of analytical strength.

This volume begins, therefore, with an investigation of differentiated meanings of development, themes which weave through the following chapters. In the next chapter, Anne Kathrine Larsen discusses concepts such as ‘development’, ‘developed’ and ‘backward’, as commonly used by policy makers, but also by villagers in rural Malaysia. She finds contradictions between a traditional cognitive distinction between cleared land and jungle and the rationale behind current development efforts, as exemplified in the discourses and actions of the government and its developers, various ethnic groups, and foreign tourists, environmentalists and other commentators. In Chapter 3, Aud Talle considers how female bar workers at a border town between Kenya and Tanzania manage their identity as modern (developed) persons through commodified consumption. She shows how they literally embody development in their search for economic independence. Taking up the theme of borders in the next chapter, Kneževiæ describes the events encompassing the establishment of the new Slovene-Croat border, and the ‘leaping differences’ in economic life between ‘rich’, ‘spared’ Slovenia and impoverished, warring Croatia which have greatly mobilised sentiments of loyalty to respective nation-states. Despite this, a prevalent self-understanding of ‘oneness’ still persists, and Kneževic demonstrates a specific incompatibility between two discourses, that of the nation-state and that of the locality.

In the following chapter, Mairal Buil and Bergua discuss the ‘argumentative turn’ in policy circles. They show how ‘those actions labelled as “development” [construction of dams in this instance] which are defined in terms of an economic discourse, tend to deny any cultural notions which are in turn considered to be “ideology” or “irresponsible attitudes”’. This division of discourses reappears in Chapter 6, where Boissevain and Theuma illustrate how government policies to reduce increased pressures from tourism have stimulated reactions from engaged citizens, affected communities and environmental NGOs. The confrontation is generating new perceptions of physical, social and cultural heritage in Malta, in a fraught institutional context of powerful international vested interests and of controversy over the country’s notions of national identity. In the next chapter, Waldren considers how critics of infrastructural development on the island of Mallorca accuse the government of ‘destroying their own heritage’ and of being ‘incapable of planning their own future’. The planning and construction of roads in the Balearic Islands has led to major political, economic and social crisis during the past decade, and Waldren shows how road construction has become a symbol of the changing and varied perceptions of the environment, of modernity and technology, of power and protest that now form a ‘culture of heterogeneity’ in Spain. Staying with the theme of tourism in the final chapter, Lindknud shows how drastic changes in the environment of a town, here changing the physical structure of a village in the context of a tourist discourse, provoke debates and controversies between inhabitants of different social and geographic origins, gathering and revealing different worldviews and cultural perspectives. He analyses how local development can give rise to some unexpected socialising effects, leading to renewed awareness of neighbourliness and the links with locality.

Through these chapters, anthropological perspectives on local processes shed light on global issues of development and governance. What has distinguished anthropology from other forms of investigation has been a willingness to question accepted routines and beliefs, and by doing so to make explicit taken-for-granted relationships and procedures of power. At heart, this is an optimistic pursuit—in recognising the means of power, we create the possibility of changing the status quo. Therefore, anthropological writings and practices must be intrinsically political, in the sense that they stand in a particular relationship to power. What this volume shows is that anthropologists have a role other than advocate or ‘expert’ on particular ‘ethnic groups’ within established structures of power, but can act as analysts and commentators on political situations and processes. Anthropology is, therefore, a theory of practice, within which theory and practice can never be fully discrete.

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Chapter 2

Discourses on development in Malaysia

Anne Kathrine Larsen

The concept of development

Today 'development' is encountered as one of the most frequently used concepts in the discourses between nations (Escobar 1991:658; Rabo 1992a:1). Although alternative understandings of the word, empirical and normative, are regularly discussed, we continue to employ the concept as if its content is *more or less* unambiguous and universally accepted. These usages have evolved in the West, and their ethnocentric base has been pointed out by many, not least by those critics seeking alternative futures for the so-called developing countries (Gule 1993:226–7; Rabo 1992a).

Lexical uses of 'development' may define the concept (among other definitions) as a process where something is unfolding until its potentialities are reached, or merely as a process where something is continuously incrementing towards something greater, better, etc. (see, for instance, Hornby 1980:236; Longman 1979:299–300; Webster 1983:498–499). In other words, this either postulates a continuous process, or a process resulting in a final, complete stage. Both processes may moreover be the result of intrinsic powers and/or external forces (Gule 1993:223). If we examine our own European history, we find the ideas that culture and society were *growing* also in antiquity. This growth was literally seen as organic, like a flower unfolding until maturity. Development was moreover not seen as open-ended, as societies—like biological species—were expected to go through prescribed cyclical changes from growth to decay. Christianity interrupted this notion by bringing in the idea of a final doomsday, and therefore an idea of lineal growth. The view of social change as a necessity was, however, retained. After the Renaissance, changes in society and culture were seen as governed by natural or scientific laws rather than in accordance with a plan of God. This was the result of influences from advances in the natural sciences. Somewhere in the last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the future came to be seen as open-ended.[1] 'Progress', alluding to a continuous advancement or improvement, likewise came to dominate partly on behalf of 'development' (Esteva 1992:8–9; Gule 1993:223–5; Nisbet 1969:9–11).

After World War II, the labelling of certain parts of the world as 'underdeveloped' in contrast to the 'developed' world became dominating. These descriptions were of course not value free: the Western world was seen as the ideal, while the 'others' should aspire to reach the same level (Escobar 1991:658; Esteva 1992:6–10; Gule 1993:226). The prelude to these ideas can be found in the United States, in the New Deal of the 1930s which aimed at solving social problems through the application of social sciences (Escobar 1991:662) and Truman's post-war programme for the 'underdeveloped' (Esteva 1992:6–7). Thus the foundation was laid for the post-world-war situation, still found today, where the relations between the so-called Third World and the industrial countries are steered by discourses and practices about 'development' (Escobar 1991:658).

'Development' as a metaphor

While the Greeks and the Romans saw the changes in society as organic growth in a literal sense, this metaphor later came to be used more figuratively. Today the metaphor of growth is still deep-rooted in our thinking about society. Nisbet reminds us that what we actually *see* are mingled facts of persistence and change, not 'development' and other related terms. At least not in cultures and societies. Such expressions have relevance in their literal and empirical sense in the organic world. But applied to social and cultural phenomena these words are metaphorical only (Nisbet 1969:3–11).

Although the content of the metaphor may vary somewhat both inter- and intraculturally, and even contextually with the same individuals, it has in general a positive connotation, bestowed with prestige, an aim of nations and peoples to be implemented partly through a rational planning process. We also apply the adjective 'developed'—contrary to 'developing', 'underdeveloped' and even 'backward', bestowed with gradually more pejorative meanings—to certain conditions of nations/peoples on the ground of more or less visible signs. Through the use of 'development' and related expressions in the post-war political and economic international discourses, these terms and indicators have spread worldwide and have become internalised among people belonging to traditions with quite different ideas about continuation and change in their world.[2]

'Developed', 'developing' and 'underdeveloped' have become tools through which people learn about themselves and interpret their lives (Escobar 1991:675–6; Ferguson 1990: xiii; Nisbet 1969:6–7). This should give food for thought and perhaps be a matter of concern, not least among people of the Third World, who—after all—have been overwhelmed with projects, campaigns and other efforts to make them 'developed', both from their own leaders as well as from outsiders. As metaphors, these terms have thus showed themselves to be very powerful.

Development in Malaysia

While Western understandings of society historically have alternated between notions of open-ended processes and movements towards defined, final stages, the concept of development may today refer to both, depending on the context. Although these dual usages may also be found in non-Western countries, in this chapter, I will discuss the predominance of development seen as a two-stage model in one country highly dedicated to development, namely Malaysia.

As in many other Third World countries, there have been extensive efforts at development planning in the country during the last decades. Robertson says that 'Malaysia has been more assiduous than many states in its pursuit of orderly development' and mentions further that the system of planning in the country has been regarded as both effective and successful (Robertson 1984:232–3). Especially after the ethnic riots of 1969, where the indigenous Malay majority population voiced their dissatisfaction with lagging economically behind the immigrant Chinese population, the Malay-dominated government[3] launched its New Economic Policy in 1971 in order to redress this balance, as well as to eradicate poverty in general. This policy came to be mirrored in the already existing Five Year Plans, partly to be implemented through regional plans and other development schemes, and managed through a series of development authorities.

While the presence of any great number of Malays in urban areas is a fairly recent phenomenon, the rural areas have been inhabited predominantly by Malays attached to the primary industries. The incidence of poverty has also been higher in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. As the regional plans have been covering predominantly rural areas and jungle, some of the poorest segments of the target group could thus be reached. Viewing the situation almost twenty-five years later, a lot has been achieved. The incidence of poverty in the country has dropped from 47.3 per cent of all households in 1970 to 9.6 per cent in 1995.[4] In this same period, the average annual growth rate stands at 6.5 per cent (Kahn 1996:50). Looking at the average monthly gross income in 1995, it had increased in only five years from RM1,167 to RM2,007.[5]

The emphasis on the uplift of the poorer segments, and especially the indigenous population, is closely linked to the government's general aim of *developing* the country. In the prime minister's own words, he refers to the 'objective of developing Malaysia into an industrialised country' and that they should 'aim for a Malaysia that is a *fully developed* country by the year 2020', partly alluding to the goal of achieving a so-called developed nation status (my emphasis).[6] This goal is partly to come about through economic policies, such as development projects, laws and regulations, and partly through instilling the right 'attitudes' in people, especially the Malays. This group has been described by politicians, scholars and others as partly lacking the right attitude and outlook for an active participation in a modern, progressive nation, a view which has been much discussed and contested (see, for instance, Mahathir 1970; Shamsul 1997:6–7). Thus, edifying speeches, visual presentations and mass media campaigns are launched at the population.

The government evidently puts great efforts into making Malaysia into a 'modern, developed country'. Unquestionably the GNP for the past years *does* show impressive growth. But as critics willingly point out, the government has also put a great deal of effort into creating what many will denote as prestige projects, such as producing a local car, and going for the largest of its kind, the so-called mega projects: construction of the world's tallest flagpole in Kuala Lumpur; the tallest building presently in the world is also being completed in the capital (Petronas Twin Towers); and there have been discussions about building what is said to be the world's longest building, a two-kilometre-long structure over the Klang River (*Asiaweek,* 5 July 1996:27).

Visitors to the country can hardly escape the captivating television pieces which regularly appear on the screen, showing the developed and developing Malaysia, with a relative prominence of Malays, but also showing togetherness/cooperation of the different ethnic groups. The pictures show the ‘great’ achievements of the nation as impressive high-rise buildings, highways, hosting of regional and international arrangements such as sports, games and political summits. Pictures are also shown from work sites like mass production factories, modern agricultural practices, practical vocations and schools, but also from picturesque sites such as villages, beaches and jungles. The pieces are accompanied with catchy songs which incorporate the dual message that Malaysia *is* developing (and *has* already achieved impressive results) and that the citizens *should* work towards these aims, as more or less clearly presented.

The building of the young nation has also been accompanied by interpretations of history which may put the present development efforts in an explanatory and therefore legitimate light. To give some examples:

> In a historical museum in Malacca, the town which is seen as the cradle of Malay history on the peninsula, the visitor can, following the presentations on wall charts, move from one historical era to another. The arrival in Malacca in the 1390s of the Javanese Prince Parameswara, later to become its first ruler, is portrayed in a heroic fashion. He brought with him Islam, which is perhaps the strongest identity marker of Malays. The domination of various European and other rulers in subsequent centuries is on the contrary seen as both violent and causing stagnation for the town. But then, post-war and post-independence has *again* brought prosperity to the country. The presentation thus follows a well-known cross-cultural theme in myth as well as in the writing of history.
>
> Another example is the Legend of Mahsuri, a Langkawi woman who was unfairly accused of adultery and sentenced to death more than 200 years ago. Upon her execution she swore seven generations of misery upon the island group, which was seen as the consecutive Siamese wars that plagued the islands. After the Prime Minister in the early 1980s declared Langkawi the target of tourist development, brochures narrating this legend appeared with a new comment: the seven generations had elapsed and the ban was now evidently lifted as Development was coming to the islands.

The emphasis on development has undoubtedly come to connote, both in speech and practice, economic growth. To quote the prime minister in the foreword of the present 7th Malaysia Plan: ‘The Plan continues to give serious attention to strategies for generating sustained rapid economic growth as well as to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are equitably shared among Malaysians of all ethnic groups and among States as well as the rural and urban population.'[7] In this same plan, however, it is also acknowledged that this same growth has caused some damage to the quality of life, and it promises to rectify the excesses of *over-development:* 'the Plan also addresses the need to balance growth with protection of the environment and Malaysia's natural resources. It acknowledges the emergence of various social problems in Malaysia in the wake of the rapid growth of the economy.'[8] Thereby, a note is struck, at least in speech, seeking an additional balance between economic growth on one side, and the environment and quality of life on the other.

Development efforts

The government's early developmental efforts, aiming to improve the economic situation of primarily the indigenous population, were reflected in the regional development plans initiated in the 1970s.[9] These plans were supposed to change the physical and economic structure of what were considered to be *less* developed areas. Not unexpectedly, these areas contained relatively great areas of jungle and scattered settlements. The regional development plans had certain physical or visual characteristics,[10] and in practice development came to be mostly associated with the physical development of geographical regions. Although the overall goal was the economic improvement of the inhabitants and development of the economic potentials of the areas, it seems as if the means chosen to achieve these goals in certain contexts and situations often came to be considered as an end in themselves (although the ultimate goals of improving the quality of life were indeed retained).

In everyday speech and usage, development of a region, to a great extent, came to be used synonymously with clearance of the jungle, construction of transversing roads and other infrastructure, and creation of planned settlements through building of low-cost dwellings and other buildings supposed to house public services and facilities. It can be noted that in English one speaks of 'land development' in this way, and that regional development, or even development in general, is frequently associated with this narrow usage.[11] The term 'urban development', which became widespread at the beginning of this century, connotes similarly a physical, spatial process of constructing modern installations (Esteva 1992:9–10).

Political causes can, to a certain degree, be seen to account for this physical preponderance in development. The clearing of the jungle for physical development of an area has, in line with the above, resulted in highly visible projects that can be presented to the outside world. The implementors of the development plans are under pressure to show progress, and construction of roads, houses, etc. are visible signs of this. A problem, however, has been that the people who are supposed to benefit from these structures have in many cases shown a certain reluctance to make use of them, a phenomenon Malaysia indeed shares with many other countries involved in development planning. I will not examine all the reasons that may lie behind these failures of expectation, and which—by all means—have been acknowledged by the responsible planners and politicians. In fact, there have long been critical discourses also among local bureaucrats and planners that explicitly point to the human being—and not the physical installations—both as a target for and an actor in the development efforts. As an officer in Dara[12] told me in 1987: 'Earlier we did much physical development. Now we find that the physical aspect is sufficient, but we need to focus on the people so that they can enjoy the facilities. We need human development!'

While it was ascertained in the previous section that development was commonly seen in relation to a two-stage paradigm, that is a stage that is either reached or not (or even gone beyond, alluding to the prime minister's idea of *over-development*), in this section development is linked to the *contents* of each stage, and to the efforts attempting a transition from one to the other. Clearance of the forest and substitution by man-made structures seem closely linked to this process. This model has often come to overshadow other guidelines, especially in regional planning, where space necessarily is an important dimension. Physical development is not only an actual process, but a main issue in discourses between politicians and bureaucrats and others in charge of proposing, designing and implementing a plan. When turning to villagers, we find that this cognitive map of development is not only an abstract scheme for the bureaucrats, but similarly held—or adopted—at grassroots level, for instance among rural Malays.

Although practical and political circumstances may partly explain these directions in Malaysian planning efforts, they do not entirely account for the great persistence of this way of thinking among 'ordinary' people also. We are here referring to a mental picture of 'development=bulldozing of jungle in order to construct built-up areas'. The environment is 'seen' and interpreted through such lenses, and pride and other feelings are connected to the achievements of being able to 'conquer the jungle'.

Villagers' view of development

Malay villages, or *kampung,* are commonly found along roads, rivers, beaches and on the edges of towns. Although they are administered as bound entities under village headmen, they seldom comprise clusters physically set apart from the surroundings unless natural boundaries are present. The settlements are, rather, continuously spread out along, for instance, traffic arteries, and the administrative borders between *kampung* are often not clear to village people themselves.

Malay villages are traditionally based on primary industries with wet-rice farming, oil-palm farming or fishing as main sources of income. In addition, household members tend to involve themselves in a variety of small-scale enterprises, both for subsistence and cash economy. Today, if villages are located close to factories or tourist spots, the inhabitants are also able to work as wage labourers in such industries. While the average household income has increased and the incidence of poverty decreased in the rural areas over the last twenty-five years, they are still lagging behind the urban areas and the gap between them is increasing.[13] The government has therefore, through its various agencies, attempted to create alternative and additional income-generating projects in the villages. Thus today you can hardly walk into any Malaysian *kampung* without encountering various governmental-initiated development projects located there.

Local level (or village) policy has been described partly as a system where politicians offer projects in return for support. Projects can be seen as stepping stones for aspiring local politicians (Shamsul 1986: chapter 5). The villagers, overwhelmingly Malay, are thus presented through the speeches of visiting politicians not only with the promised projects, but implicitly to a scenario of what the 'good life' should entail and what eventually will be achieved for them. Not only politicians, but the stream of visiting bureaucrats, the teachers in local schools, and visiting and returned students and graduates bring with them the idea of the development of the Malays *(pembangunan orang Melayu)* and of Malaysia (Ong 1987:48 ff.). This idea is presented through a certain language, where words like development *(pembangunan),* planning *(perancangan),* togetherness *(bersama-sama),* progress *(kemajuan*[14]*)* and success *(kejayaan)* are prominent.[15]

Today the idea as well as the concept of 'development' has reached remote villages, and the inhabitants of those I have visited and sometimes stayed in in the state of Kedah, especially on Pulau Tuba, Langkawi,[16] were eager to discuss this issue with me. That is, people seemed eager to bring it into the conversation on their own initiative, and to contemplate loudly about the present and future, especially of their own villages.

A striking feature of how they perceived development, as evident in their discussions and small-talk, was the notion of the two opposing states, 'not yet developed' *(belum membangun)* and 'developed' *(membangun)*. An idiosyncratic feature of the Malay language is indeed the frequent use of the softer expression 'not yet' in preference to the more definite 'not'. In the context of development, this language nevertheless expresses, first, the use of two demarcated conditions of which one is a final state, and, second, that underdeveloped sites and societies evidently will be developed sometime in the future. I frequently encountered questions of whether I found Malaysia developed or not yet developed, and was further asked if my home country was developed or not yet so. A former Kedah boy, later businessman and politician, told me that he once went to Stockholm and was surprised that it was *not yet developed*. Although I did not ask him on that occasion to specify what he meant, I have on several other occasions heard him use 'development' synonymously with the construction of infrastructure and modern buildings.

When asking village people how they perceived these two conditions, they would point to 'developed' as a state where various physical structures would be present: built-up areas with high-rise buildings, 'modern' houses (i.e. made from concrete), highways, etc. Often they would refer to pictures of development on television. A taxi driver told me that Langkawi was becoming developed. When I asked him to specify what he meant, he pointed to the 12-hole golf course that was now to be enlarged to an 18-hole golf course.

Although villagers would vary somewhat as to what should be present when being developed (when asked to specify), they seemed to hold this notion that development was a final stage with visual physical characteristics which some areas and countries had reached, but especially the villages had *not yet* come to. This does not mean that villagers would not be critical of specific projects, especially when these seemed to fail. It could be a small-scale village factory where the employees were given notice due to lack of orders and unprofitability in general, or a newly built jetty which after a short time deteriorated due to bad construction and workmanship. Villagers took up a waiting attitude to actual projects, especially income-generating ones, as they have witnessed many failures along that line. They did not voice great expectations when new projects were announced or launched, and they did not sound surprised when failure came.

Some villagers of Pulau Tuba did, furthermore, express an additional scepticism to land being sold at increasingly higher prices on their island due to Langkawi's expected future as a large-scale tourist destination. Although they saw possibilities both for earning money themselves through land transactions and from enterprises coming in, they frequently added that they were afraid as they actually did not have a general view of what would happen on *their* particular island. Would it really be wise of them to trade their land for money, and would outsiders come and take control? They would often conclude our conversation with, *Kami takut juga* ('we are scared, also'). Yet, this reluctance did not question the overall idea of development connoting construction of modern, large-scale installation as a general desirable aim for them.

Local resistance towards development projects *is* found, although this represents the exception. But rather than questioning the overall development aims, people tend to stand up only when their particular neighbourhood is threatened by construction work. In fact, some resistance groups seem to emerge only then, while other residents want to avoid trouble and are reluctant to stand up altogether.[17] The typical newspaper articles on local resistance are from urban neighbourhoods, or villages on the outskirts of urban areas, where large-scale construction work is taking place.

Some elements enforcing the villagers' view

A resemblance to the dichotomy discussed above is found in the traditional way of talking about *hutan,* or jungle, versus *kampung,* which can be translated not only as village, but also as built-up area, community, or rural settlement. I would say that *kampung* can be used as widely as all the area where the jungle has been cleared. In the view of rural people, the jungle is mostly seen as menacing and associated with negative forces. It is the home of wild boars, lethal snakes and harmful spirits. Illnesses are frequently diagnosed by traditional healers, *bomoh,* as caused by spirits from the jungle as a result of unduly trespassing on their territory. The jungle should therefore be conquered, or at least kept in check. If not regularly cleared, it grows back with great speed onto the village. Clearings in or bordering on the jungle are, on the other hand, considered attractive and beautiful.[18]

Based on my field study of the fishermen of Pulau Tuba, a certain tendency towards *dualistic thinking* could also be detected in descriptions of the traditional spirit world: the Spirit of the Sea was contrasted with the Spirit of the Land, but then again the Spirit of the Land was contrasted with the Spirit of the Jungle.[19] Before building a house or erecting a net for catching birds in the village, certain rituals would be held where pleas were made to the Land Spirit residing in that area. The intention was to ensure its goodwill so that it would not harm those utilising the plot or net. The same might happen before going to sea, although today the Sea Spirit is most commonly approached only if the fishermen have experienced bad luck at sea, and not as a general preventive measure. People ventured less frequently into the jungle, perhaps only to collect jungle products or to clear new land. The Spirit of the Jungle was therefore not sought to be appeased and controlled regularly, and to venture into the jungle was seen as a dangerous enterprise. It was not considered good to enter it on your own as you could more easily be harmed by known or unknown forces, without being able to receive assistance from others.

The traditional cognitive dualism between *kampung* and jungle, and the idea of improvement through physical clearing and rebuilding with man-made structures, may account for the *pervasiveness* of thinking among Malays of development as leading to a final, definite state with certain physical characteristics. Although villagers may be frustrated by the lack of development initiative in rural areas, they seem to share the general official view of what development should be. Critical voices are mostly heard on the quantitative aspect of development, that is, regarding the uneven distribution of the goods: rural versus urban, rich versus poor, etc. It is felt that too little of the building efforts take place in the rural areas, and that too little of the benefits of development trickle down to the poor people. A traditional deep-rooted sentiment exists in Malay society stating that the prosperity of people is not seen as unfair as long as others are able to receive a certain share of it (Larsen 1994:171–3).

On Pulau Tuba, many people expressed frustration at the visits of bureaucrats from various local branches of governmental departments. *Dia cakap sahaja* (‘they only talk’) and *dia jalan sahaja* (‘they only travel around’) were the recurrent complaints commonly heard. If only a federal minister or state politician could visit the island, things would move, it was said. Implementation of certain development projects has probably been carried out following in the wake of such visits where speeches were given including promises of projects. Thus, although exhibiting some scepticism to whether actual promises and plans would benefit them, people generally seem to agree to the *qualitative* picture of what development should entail.

The previously mentioned official rhetoric and slogans reaching the villages do of course influence their view of ‘development’. Villagers are made proud to see what can and will be achieved, and indeed has been achieved. Here we touch on yet another cause of their support, namely a negative sentiment related to the idea of being perceived as *backward*. The colonial history of the Malays, as well as their rural and somewhat inferior economic position compared to the immigrant communities, have perhaps boosted this sensitivity towards the concept (the English word is often used among villagers, although they have an indigenous expression *ulu* to mean something like backward). Foreigners (tourists, environmentalists, and of course anthropologists) showing positive interest in people’s traditional artifacts and behaviour, may be warded off by questions asking whether they think these matters of interest are representative of Malay or Malaysian contemporary life. An alleged event that is far from forgotten among both urban and rural people is the hapless mistake in a foreign textbook which depicted the Malays as living in trees. This story has frequently been narrated to me as proof of the misconceptions of foreigners. On the back of a postcard depicting various Malaysian dwellings it is written: ‘Over the Sea, on Top of Hills. Malaysia villages are everywhere but NEVER on top of trees!’[20]

Tradition in a more narrow sense (costumes, wedding-rituals, etc.), however, is valued as a cultural heritage and identity marker. Thus ‘tradition’ and ‘traditional’ carry a dual connotation in relation to value. It is in some contexts considered a virtue to adhere to tradition, especially to follow the body of Malay customs known as *adat*. This is, for instance, conspicuous during life-cycle rituals, when adherence to traditional norms and behaviour is seen as paying respect to their culture and ancestors, as opposed to adapting to the more corrupted ways of foreigners, especially Westernisation. But when *adat* are associated with heresy due to their origin, not only in Islam, but also in Hinduism and animism, these customs are regarded as expressions of ignorance and backwardness. Symptomatically they are practised and supported more by the older than the younger generation of Malays, and more by the rural than the urban population. Although they are usually still part of a wedding ceremony, for instance, and felt perhaps to be the summit of the celebration to make the wedding complete, these rituals are sometimes underplayed and performed somewhat in seclusion in order to de-emphasise the un-Islamic strain in the festivities. In this sense, 'purified' Islam is regarded as enlightened, modern and linked up to being developed in a spiritual sense. People thus have to balance between these two sentiments in their behaviour. The problem is often solved by acceptance of certain traditions which have been cleared as harmless, while the performance of others has ceased, as they have officially been pointed out as clearly having their origins in other religions or belief systems which violate Islamic monotheism. The fishermen's annual ceremony of *puja pantai,* which was held in order to mollify the Sea Spirit, is frequently pointed out as an example of heresy and backwardness by the people on Tuba. This ceremony was banned by the authorities several decades ago.

The very visual proofs of development in the country are, on the other hand, regularly brought forward in order to show that the Malaysians can be as clever as 'others'. The fact that Malaysia produced its first local car some years ago has frequently been pointed out as a case in point. Such creations of national sentiments make the rural population good allies for the government when forcefully repelling the scepticism of certain foreigners to the country's development policy, branding them imperialistic or in pursuit of their own interest in keeping the nation underdeveloped. Three issues, partly related, come to mind: the future of the aboriginal people of Malaysia, the *orang asli,* deforestation as an environmental issue and the universality of human rights.

Objections, especially by foreign critics, to governmental attempts to integrate the *orang asli* into mainstream Malaysian lifestyles, have been forcefully repudiated as romanticism wanting to freeze these people's traditional lifestyle, instead of helping them face development and make use of the opportunities modern society offers. The critics are thus cited in support of preventing development. Felling of the rainforest, which has long been a concern of the world community, has also been a sensitive issue in Malaysia. Deforestation is seen by many critics as detrimental both to the *orang asli* as well as to the world's ecoclimate. The government has angrily seen the interference of these critics as untimely and attempting to hamper economic growth in the country. Lastly, the government's rejection of universal human rights in favour of so-called Asian values and—if any—Asian human rights does also touch the issue of development. As Malaysia is still regarded to be in the process of developing, and moreover has a tradition with collectivist values and loyalty to the leader in preference to individualistic attitudes and thinking, the argument goes, the country cannot afford to abide by Western individualistic rights which may impede its development efforts. My objective here is not to side with any of these issues, but to argue that confrontations surrounding them are interpreted and expressed by the government as due to instigating forces trying to keep Malaysia down. And moreover, many people at the grass-root level seem to agree readily, and to see local and foreign critics as advocates of exoticisation and stagnation of the country.

Other discourses

It should be emphasised that the above notions of development which are expressed in speech and practice are not the only ones in existence in Malaysia. Although the concept of development spurs immediate connotations of physical clearing of fields or jungle and rebuilding of large-scale ‘modern’ man-made structures, closer discussions with people also reveal notions about a more holistic development, with social aims and where life quality should be the ultimate goal—*hidup sempurna,* or the ‘perfect or complete life’. People, bureaucratic planners and non-planners alike, tend to add that, of course, spiritual values are what really matter in life. It has been mentioned before that the fishermen on Tuba expressed a certain ambiguity regarding the arrival of development projects on their island. A similar attitude can be detected when talking about the future in general. While development as such is welcomed, the assumed side effects, such as juvenile delinquency and lack of mutual care and assistance among villagers, are notions people frequently articulate when talking about ongoing changes and the future. Still, general rejections of development efforts on the island and discussions on alternative development scenarios were not heard. People seemed to be passively awaiting, and accepting, the turn of events.

Moreover, there are Malaysians of all ethnic denominations who have voiced a *basic* scepticism to the turn of development in Malaysia. Opposition politicians and academics, who have been critical all along to what is happening in the country, have also been preoccupied with the concept of development as such. It is often stated that development should aim at improving people’s quality of life in the *fullest* sense, and that it therefore encompasses many aspects including non-economic and non-material ones (Lim 1981:52–7; Sithambaran 1981:275–7). Other voices critical of the direction of current development can be heard among young Malay intellectuals with so-called fundamentalist religious sympathies, or within revivalist movements generally, who have called for a development with more spiritual contents (Nagata 1994:63–90; Ong 1987:182 ff.). Although the provision of material and economic needs is acknowledged, these aspects of development are not equated with physical development, which may only be brought into a discussion as a *means* for achieving development.

Again, as in the West, where we may talk about development both as a continuous, open-ended process and as a transformation from an underdeveloped to a developed state, this is also the case in Malaysia. Even if the latter two-stage cognitive model seems to be the dominant way of seeing and expressing matters, this does not rule out parallel ideas of society as continuously changing for the better, or sometimes even for the worse.

Conclusions

In this chapter some dominant discourses on development in Malaysia have been presented as used by the government and government servants, as well as among rural people. One basic way of thinking is to associate development with (a) a defined and final stage, consisting of (b) physical man-made structures. Such a paradigm seems to penetrate people's cognitive pictures, thinking, and even identity and values.

This model undoubtedly has a relation to powerful Western thinking on development. Here, it is suggested that local explanations must also be sought for the special character and content of the term, and the relative emphases on its various facets. One source can be found in the traditional way of thinking where the notion of jungle is opposed to village or settlement, and where this dualism is bestowed with opposite values. Reinforced by governmental rhetoric where visual development is linked with pride and identity, some of people's receptiveness to the official planning models without much explicit remonstrance is accounted for.

A distinction between abstract cognitive models of development and how the term is articulated in discourses and practice has been attempted. In Malaysia, social values such as increased standards of living and equitable growth have commonly been set as the ultimate goals of planning; in daily speech and implementation, the physical and visual aspects of a plan are often emphasised. It has furthermore proved useful to distinguish between the various contexts in which 'development' is used, from government campaigns and bureaucratic vocabulary to a term bestowed with anticipation and pride among villagers, and—more reluctantly perhaps—in association with the mass of local development projects these rural people have witnessed throughout the years. Through an understanding of the feelings and identity associated with the concept in all these various facets, a complex picture emerges.

Notes

1 Exceptions are, for instance, certain versions of Marxist theory, which see the future as predestined.

2 See, for instance, Rabo's case study from Syria and Jordan where pupils today, belonging to an Islamic tradition with different ideas about growth and change, are quite familiar with (and embrace) the idea of development (Rabo 1992b).

3 Since 1974 the National Front has been in power. It is a multi-ethnic coalition consisting of various parties, but where UMNO, the leading Malay party, is dominant.

4 Source: DOS and EPU, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia.

5 Source: 7th Malaysia Plan Report.

6 Source: 'Malaysia: the way forward (Vision 2020)'. Working Paper presented by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad at the Inaugural Meeting of the Malaysian Business Council on 28 February 1991, Kuala Lumpur.

7 Source: 7th Malaysia Plan Report.

8 Source: 7th Malaysia Plan Report.

9 According to Shamsul, rural development programmes also existed in the 1960s, i.e. before the NEP. As with later development efforts, 'these "development projects" were infrastructural in nature' (1997:8–9).

10 Information is based on interviews with representatives from Kejora, Jengka, Ketengah, Dara, Kesedar and Keda in 1987 and 1988, selected masterplans and evaluation reports pertaining to these regions.

11 Malays often use English, or at least an intermingling of English expressions, even when they speak among themselves. So is the case also with the term 'development'.

12 The Pahang Tenggara Development Authority.

13 Source: DOS and EPU, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia.

14 Both *pembangunan* and *kemajuan* can in fact be translated as 'development'. But while the former also connotes terms such as building, construction and foundation, implying physical structures, *kemajuan* relates more to concepts such as improvement and advancement. While these latter terms imply more abstract and evaluative concepts, they are nevertheless applied mostly in the context of material or visual development.

15 An interesting analogy can be made to the Malay nationalist discourse on the economy, which 'did not address the issue using known economic nomenclature, such as "productivity", "growth", "supply and demand" or "share market". Instead, terms such as *pembangunan* (development), *kemajuan* (progress) and *perniagaan* (commerce) were used to capture the economic interest, predicament and future of the Malays in the envisioned "Malay nation"' (Shamsul 1997:2).

Robertson, when speaking about the bewildering frequency with which some countries relabel their development efforts, refers to a headline in a Malaysian newspaper: 'After *Maju* ("success") and *Jaya Diri* ("selfreliance") a new drive: *Gerakan Pembaharuan*—The watchword is "Renewal"!' (*Sunday Times of Malaysia* (6/8) 1972, quoted in Robertson 1984:108).

16 In the period 1982–92, altogether I spent thirteen months living on the island.

17 Source: *Local Communities and the Environment,* seminar organised by the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme's Asia-Pacific 2000 project and the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (Danced), Petaling Jaya, 25–26 October 1997. Georgetown: Star Publications (M) Bhd.

18 Such dualistic thinking is reminiscent of the culture-nature dualism described as an important dichotomy in thinking. As with many cultural models claimed to be universal, it has received criticism from many quarters (see, for instance, Descola and Pálsson 1996:1–21).

19 Although two spirits were contrasted at the time, they were actually three—each associated with a separate domain. When, in addition, it is believed that the Sea Spirit consists of seven siblings or expressions, for instance, but that *all* these spirits actually are one, namely Satan, the picture is complicated. One should therefore not assume an overall or one-sided dualistic way of thinking.

20 Nikki postcards, distributed by Nikkisia Industries Sdn Bhd KL.

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Chapter 3

Sex for leisure

Modernity among female bar workers in Tanzania

Aud Talle

This chapter concerns female bar attendants and their ‘quest for freedom’ (Miller 1994:72) in a small town, Namanga, on the border between Kenya and Tanzania.[1] The desire for individuality manifested in the ethnography of the Namanga bar women resonates with larger discursive issues of development and modernity in contemporary Tanzania. Also, the tale of these women points to considerable female agency in negotiating gender relations. It is widely known that female bar workers in Tanzania and Kenya, as elsewhere in Africa, not only serve beer and food, but also attend to their customers sexually out of working hours to augment their salaries (cf. Orubuloye *et al.* 1994; White 1990; Nelson 1987). ‘They need to eat tomorrow’ was the laconic explanation of one male informant of this study, alluding to, in his mind, the self-evident link between materiality and sexual behaviour for this category of women. The close association between bar work and ‘prostitution’ *(umalaya)* makes bar work a morally ambiguous occupation.

Notwithstanding the fact that young women are primarily drawn to bar work out of economically defined needs, a search for ‘money’ or a ‘job’ as they themselves phrase it—bar work being one of the few job opportunities for uneducated and penniless women—the contention of this chapter is that by engaging in salaried work there is also an element of wanting a more ‘independent’ and ‘exciting’ life. The Swahili word *uhuru* (from *huru* emancipation, free from slavery) is synonymous with ‘freedom’ and used with particular reference to a country’s independence from colonial rule (for example, *Uhuru ya Tanzania*). The term is also used colloquially with reference to individual or personal freedom and frequently employed by the women of this study for why they ‘broke away’ *(-pata uhuru)* to come to Namanga. As they live singly away from their kin, are financially autonomous and sexually not constrained by spouses, the life of bar women, concomitant with other single, income-earning women, contrasts dramatically in terms of male control to that of married women (cf. Cooper 1995). The choice of women to live singly severely challenges male authority which, in large parts of East Africa, used to be rooted in a marriage institution giving men precedence over women.

The female bar attendants of Namanga fall within a category known from many African societies as ‘independent’, ‘free’ or ‘single’ women (cf. for example, Dinan 1983; Pittin 1983; Caldwell *et al.* 1989; Cooper 1995; White 1990). Their number is particularly high in urban Africa. Researchers often exert caution in applying the term prostitution because of the contested nature of naming in the African context (cf. for example, Standing 1992). In the literature, as well as in local discourses, however, relationships entered into by single women and, most commonly, married men are often referred to as ‘prostitution’, underscoring the commercial dimension of their sexuality. The autonomy of these women is based, however, and, it may appear, ironically, upon an attachment to men through various cohabiting forms of transacting sexual and domestic services for material revenues. Although exhibiting many similarities to a conjugal relationship, these relationships are nevertheless substantially different from a regular marriage. Not only are they temporary and fluid within the life career of a person, but, more significantly, they are based upon consensus between ‘free’ individuals without the interference of family preferences.

By detaching themselves from constraining gender roles and institutional family authorities—simply refusing to follow custom—and thus pursuing their individualism and self-creation, women working in the bars of Namanga appear to act within a modern paradigm (Miller 1994). Although engaging in an employment charged with moral overtones, by means of money and commodified consumption, they negotiate an identity and self-image as developed and modern persons (cf. Miller 1995). Their self-representation as *watu wa mjini* (‘town people’) mediates traditional concepts of morality.

In Tanzania, as elsewhere in East Africa, the concept of development (*maendeleo,* ‘going forward’) is deeply embedded in notions and images of change, modernity and prosperity: in practical terms, for somebody to be developed means, generally speaking, to become educated, be informed on technological innovations, go to church, present a properly dressed and well-cared-for body, live in a brick house, eat ‘good’ food. ‘Development’ is more or less everything that is associated with the ‘modern’ (*-a kisasa* ‘of now’) as opposed to the ‘traditional’ (*-a asili* ‘of origin’) (Talle, in press). That which is traditional belongs to *zamani* (‘before’), the ‘past’, when people were still ‘poor’ and did not know how to ‘wash and dress properly’. The temporal imagery of a discontinuity between now *(sasa)* and *zamani* points to a ‘consciousness about the present and its separation from the past’ (Miller 1994:61) in the development discourse. The transformation of this temporal consciousness has moral consequences through town people’s contempt for what they label ‘rural’ values and ways of life *(maisha ya shamba),* and conversely, through the scepticism and distress aired by proponents of ‘traditional’ values to the wanton lifestyles of ‘people in towns’, in particular young, income-seeking people (Talle ibid.; Setel 1995). Within the discursive field of development, however, the ‘traditional’, representing the authentic Tanzanian culture, may continue into the present.

The study site

Since the border between Kenya and Tanzania reopened in 1983 after being closed for several years, Namanga has become a town bustling with activity. During the colonial times and the first years following independence, Namanga was merely a border crossing containing, beside the scattered homesteads of the pastoral Maasai occupying the surrounding area, the dwellings of a few civil servants and administrative police. The population on the Tanzanian side, where this study was conducted, is about 3,000 (population census, 1988) and consists of many different ethnic groups from Tanzania and beyond. The trade, at times illegal, of beer and consumer goods across the border is lucrative. The goods are bought from wholesalers on the Kenyan side, carried across the border and ferried (often at night) to larger towns in Northern Tanzania and even to destinations further away. Goods also go in the other direction. The fluctuating value difference between the Kenyan and the Tanzanian currency has created ample opportunities for economic enterprise. Men as well as women come in large numbers to earn quick money. Those involved in the border trade usually arrive without their families and stay temporarily only. Some visit the place solely for the day. The number of guest houses, restaurants, bars, groceries, retail shops and other businesses is increasing rapidly. An employee of the local city council held that as many as 80 per cent of the house tenants were women. The message he wanted to get across was that Namanga is an exceptionally fertile ground for women to make money, not least by involving themselves in commercial sex. Namanga, surely, along with other towns on the same border, is a favourite place of business for women trafficking in consumer goods between the two countries. Being a border town, Namanga also has a substantial number of civil servants, mainly men, within the customs and police forces. Long-distance trucks and tourist buses cross the border daily thereby linking the place to larger national and international networks.

In brief, Namanga is a place characterised by quick profit, rapid cash circulation, high mobility and temporary encounters between people. The image of the frontier town comes to mind. When walking the streets of the town you meet an impressive mixture of people from far and near and from different walks of life, all seemingly looking for an opportune moment to make money. Well-travelled Tanzanian observers claim that they seldom saw a place with higher beer consumption or greater promiscuity, both of which they attribute to an extraordinary cash flow and instability in social relations.

Namanga is indeed a place of divergences and ‘boundaries’, epitomised by the national border running through the middle of the town, dividing it into two distinct and separate places, one Tanzanian and the other Kenyan. Besides a narrow strip of land running along the border on both sides and referred to as *mpakani* (‘at the border’), each side contains marginal and central, private and public, ethnically neutral and ethnically marked, dangerous and safe places. People hurry past the customs area lest they be detected with illegal goods; waitresses and customers sit on display in front-street bars consuming their beer; sophisticated Kenyan women parade the main streets; Arab and Somali women are seldom seen outside the family compound, and so on. Spaces are marked and inscribed by activities and persons; simultaneously spatial boundaries are incessantly crossed, generating and reflecting a fluid configuration of ‘places’. Namanga town is one and several places at the same time. As a locality, viz. as a place situated in space and time and as a dimension of social life, the town synthesises the parochial and the global in a remarkably dynamic interplay.

The women working in bars

In Africa recently female bar workers have often been singled out as important vectors in the AIDS epidemic. This assumption is based upon the fact that the HIV prevalence is far higher among them than in the general public, bearing witness to their focal positions in large sexual networks (cf. among others, Orubuloye *et al.* 1994; Rushing 1995). To quote but one reference, a study of female bar workers in Moshi, a town near to Namanga, found the HIV prevalence to be 33 per cent (cf. Klepp *et al.* 1995).[2] Although there are no data available on the HIV prevalence among the bar workers in Namanga, there is little reason to believe that the situation should be very different there given their continuous involvement in multiple sexual relations.

This chapter is based upon interviews and observation of 30 female and 15 male bar workers. The total number of bar workers in Namanga is estimated to be 250, of whom one-fourth are men (personal communication, medical personnel). As to their social characteristics, the Namanga women exhibit what by now appears to be a common pattern: they are typically quite young, around twenty years of age, seldom more than thirty; have usually finished primary school (Standard 7); some have even enrolled in secondary school; have become pregnant or given birth to a child out of wedlock while in school; a few have married, but are divorced or have temporarily left or fled from their husbands, none of them keep their child(ren) with them, but have left them in the custody of their mothers, or if they have been married, with the father of the child. At the time of the study all the women were single or divorced. Upon being asked, none of them had any prospects of getting married in the near future. A Tanzanian husband, they claimed, will not tolerate his wife being employed in a bar. Being a setting of excessive alcohol consumption and leisure, the bar inherently is a ‘male’ place, rendering a visit there most unbecoming for the good repute of married women.

Another characteristic of the female bar workers is that many come from mixed ethnic origins. Their parents had moved from their respective home areas in search of labour or for business purposes and had married while they were away. Many men, hailing from the south, the west, the coastal areas, even from Kenya, migrated during colonial times to seek employment as farm labourers on the European settlements widespread in Northern Tanzania. Irrespective of the origin of their parents, the majority of the women were, however, born in the northern parts of the country, in the rural areas as well as in towns and trading centres. Except for the striking absence of Maasai in their midst, the bar workers of Namanga seem to be recruited from most ethnic groups around. Although ethnic stereotypes are frequently employed to explain why, for instance, Chagga, Iraqw or Irangi women enrol in bar work (‘they are very domineering’, ‘loose’, ‘cannot do without the penis’ and others), bar work has not become an ethnic-specialised occupation, as has been the case in other areas and historical periods (cf. Oboler 1985; White 1990). The fact that many of the women had experiences of territorial mobility through the movements of their parents, apparently made their own shifting less questionable to themselves as well as their family. The detachment process begun by their parents had become a family tradition, as it were.

Irrespective of their separation from their families, most of the women retained links to their families of origin and/or children by more or less regular visits and money dispatchments. It is a commonplace practice for women earning an income, whether in bars or otherwise, to support their families back home. White argues that prostitutes in colonial Nairobi contributed substantially to the reproduction of the rural household economy at that time (cf. White 1990). Her historical study situates prostitution within specific forms of production and reproduction generated by the colonial economy. Most women in Namanga expressed sincere concern about the welfare of their families, but the surplus they gained often did not permit them to be generous mothers or daughters. Their own living expenses (house rent, food, clothing, travels), in fact, demanded a large part of their income. The severe decline in people's purchasing power all over Tanzania during the last couple of decades has not left the bar attendants unaffected, but contributed to increase their number. Some have serious difficulties in accumulating a surplus. One in particular complained that the visits to see her two sons (who stayed with their quite wealthy father some 200 km away—the woman had been his mistress) had become very 'expensive' because of all the presents *(zawadi)* she had to bring them each time. She recently had a child with another man in Namanga, making her occupied in the house and holding her business in suspension, which may partly explain her temporary 'disinterest' in visiting her older children. When I first met this woman she worked in one of the more popular bars, but when she became pregnant she left bar work and took up trans-border business.

All the women had stayed in Namanga only for a short period, less than a year. The practice of taking up work at a distance from home, *inter alia* due to the dubious moral valuation associated with bar occupation, corresponds to observations made elsewhere (cf. for example, Orubuloye *et al.* 1994). A follow-up visit to Namanga a year after the initial study showed that 90 per cent of the women participating in the study (i.e. 27 out of 30) had changed workplace or moved from Namanga. A couple had given birth. One had married.

Quite a few had left bar work altogether. The short time of service in one place points to the temporariness and spatial fluidity of bar work as an occupation and testifies to the opportuneness of the work and those who perform it. It is neither a lifelong occupation nor excludes other parallel economic activities or an oscillation between bar work and other occupations.

The attraction of the town

In general the women gave a concrete reason for their moving to Namanga, a search for money or work or joining a relative or friend already living in the place, but beneath these more specific reasons lay general arguments of a desire for *uhuru,* in the sense of being able to decide for 'themselves' or do 'what they like'. Some male commentators would underscore that once girls acquire secondary education, even only up to Form 2, they would never 'stay' in the rural areas; 'they have to come to town' was a frequently heard statement pointing to the obvious linkage between education and modern living.

As far as I could ascertain, the decision to shift to town from the viewpoint of the women was not necessarily a conscious decision as part of a planned strategy, but was more an option arising out of practical experience. They followed in the footsteps of relatives, friends and acquaintances who had told them about the favourable opportunities for making money in Namanga. The initiative to leave the home, however, was in most cases their own, many of them emphasising that it was their individual decision, albeit in negotiations with their relatives and being dependent upon care for their children. The conscious reason for departing was to earn a living to 'feed' their children and to contribute to the survival of their parents. Some had already had a few stopovers in other places before they came to Namanga. One woman claimed that she was thrown out by her mother-in-law because she failed to give birth, and was thus considered useless to her in-laws. Typically, those who had been married had experienced mistreatment or mismanagement of common goods by the husband which eventually prompted their departure. Without exception, divorced women depicted marriage as a problematic and, on the whole, negative experience, one with which they were reluctant to cope. A drive to manage on their own, surfacing in stories and narratives volunteered by the women, appeared to be common to them.

In the urban setting, or in a place such as Namanga, the women are exposed to another 'environment' *(masingira),* and 'by luck' *(kwa bahati)* they may 'break through' and meet their 'chance' *(bahati),* that is, succeed in trade or find a generous man. In contrast to the village, where young unmarried women are kept under strict surveillance by, notably, being assigned heavy and tedious household chores and confined spatially to the homestead area, the town holds unknown opportunities. To expose oneself to new surroundings, to move freely and meet people at will, increases their chances of making a living on their own. Economic independence or security appeared to be a common goal for most of the women. Several decades ago, Aidan Southall (1961) reported that the economic independence of women was one of the 'most striking characteristics of African towns in contrast to rural areas'. In comparison to the 'harshness' and 'poverty' of village life, the city represents leisure and freedom, holding prospects of money-making and affluent consumption (cf. Mills 1997 for similar observations in Thailand).

Earning a living

The bar is an 'aggressive' setting with drunk and intrusive people, loud music, smoky air and poor lighting. The division of labour between female and male bar workers is pronounced. Women attend the tables and, by moving from table to table, they are constantly in contact with customers, exposing them to male gazes and, sometimes, touches. The men serve at the counter, which is ranked as the most prestigious and responsible job in the bar,[3] or in the cooking shed where the meat *(nyama ya kuchoma)* and bananas are roasted.

Like many aspects of Namanga life, the popularity (*umaarufu)* of a bar fluctuates. Establishments disappear and reappear in new guises, owners change, and staff come and go. Besides its general ambiance and the personal qualities of the owner, the popularity of the place depends to a large extent upon the work performance of the attendants, their friendliness as well as their charm. In Namanga there is a marked difference between the customers as well as attendants in the 'modern' front-street bars selling bottled beer, which are the concern of this study, and the 'local' bars (*-a kienyeji* 'indigenous') and the backstreet bars trading in home-made brew. The latter are fewer in number by far and as the haunt of a 'local' clientele, in general attract customers with less purchasing power.

As with most income earners in present day Tanzania, bar workers are paid salaries far below their survival minimum and the major part of their income, according to the women themselves, derives from other sources, in particular from the ‘keep-change’ (i.e. tip). In 1993 the monthly salaries ranged on average between TAS 4,000–6,000 (US$8–12) without any housing or other allowances. In order to cover her living expenses, a woman would need at least 30–40,000 a month. Drunk customers may be very generous with tips, but conversely, drunk customers may also refuse to pay their bills, perhaps leaving the attendant with a loss that night. Their nominal pay may explain why some women offer to work for no salary in the more popular bars where customers are numerous and perhaps wealthier. Earning a salary far below the minimum wage, a woman, as tellingly put by informants, cannot ‘become rich from bar work alone’. The working place is primarily a stage from where to act and potentially gain money.

People come to the bars to drink beer, eat roasted meat, and associate. Bar visits, in fact, are a major leisure activity of wealthy Namanga men. These include civil servants, customs and police officers, drivers, in particular truck drivers, business men and passing visitors. For women to visit a bar, even in the company of a husband or friend, is morally reproachable. The striking presence of men and the expressive uneffeminate behaviour demonstrated by the male customers, particularly through their conspicuous consumption of beer, firmly inscribe the bar with ‘masculine’ values. Rounds of beer to friends build a man’s prestige: a ‘real’ man in Namanga is one who not only is wealthy, but, more importantly, is generous with his money. The female bar attendants are offered beers (or soda) to imbibe with their customers; beer offers, in fact, constitute the initial stages of a courting procedure. On a night with many customers and generous offers, the attendant may not be able to drink all she is offered, but returns the bottles and keeps the money. A bar attendant, constantly in company of male customers while at work, has ample opportunities to get to know a wide variety of men and if she is lucky she may find a ‘nice’ one *(mtu mzuri)* who is willing to support her, perhaps even provide her with enough money to begin her own business—her own thriving business is her vision of a life fulfilled. The beauty, charm, intelligence, and personal demeanour, particularly the words a woman talks and the way she puts them, are important female assets for negotiating sexual services in material terms. A woman, however, has to be cautious in accepting too many offers in kind, particularly from different men during the same evening. Through a language of the eyes and the body, management of the space and acceptance or refusal of beer and food offers, by the end of the evening the woman, as well as the customers, will know with whom she is to leave the place at closing time. If she is not ready to entertain a generous customer sexually, she may have to repay the expenses for food and drinks, which are often beyond her means. In addition to payment in kind, the women are remunerated in cash for the night's services. The standard rate in 1993 was TAS 2,000 (roughly US$4), a sum equivalent to half of a month's salary. The sum varies, of course, according to many factors such as the permanence of the relationship between the woman and her customer as well as their mutual affection and respect. For the most attractive of the women, bar work may be lucrative indeed and surmount any other option of earning an income. The story circulating in Namanga of the Maasai customer who robbed a bar woman of TAS 50,000 while she was in the bathroom certainly speaks to the 'backwardness' and ignorance of the Maasai as to urban codes of conduct, but also reveals the purchasing power of many bar women.

Money and sex

The number of customers a woman would entertain a month appeared to vary with many factors, not least the chances or offers they got. When asked, they would seldom give exact numbers, but, and always with reference to other women, render approximations such as 'more than ten a month', 'about fifteen', 'a man every other night', 'whenever I want'. In general, female bar workers tend to under-report their number of sexual partners mainly because they do not want to be labelled 'prostitute' *(malaya),* a term associated with promiscuity, diseases and 'dirtiness'. Only one among them gave an accurate answer and reported that she had had three sexual partners in the last week. Male informants, having their own opinions of the moral virtues of bar women, claimed that they would not leave the bar any night without a man if they could get one. The women themselves would never deny that they welcomed any opportunity to make money. The fact that they are employed, however, makes them hold their own in the face of labelling.

With reference to intimate relations, the women generally were conscious about emphasising their own decision-making power in selecting and receiving customers. Except for the tale below which was narrated by a local hairdresser to one of her customers, I never heard women complain of enforcement in sexual relations:

> The hairdresser, about twenty years old, had been drinking beer in a local hotel with, among others, one of the town's dignitaries, who

> was in his late forties. She consented to have sex with the man, but as she entered the room he had arranged for the night, she found another woman there. She knew the other woman, who worked in a bar and had a reputation for being 'very promiscuous'. The man wanted to have sex with both of them the same night, while all three were in the same room. The bar woman agreed to the arrangement, 'she was very drunk', but the hairdresser refused, since she considered the proposal disgraceful and below her dignity. Her refusal, however, raised the anger of the man, who grabbed her brutally and tried to force her into submission. To verify her story, the hairdresser showed the other woman the marks that the man had inflicted on her body.

A striking feature of Namanga life, testified in this story and in many others, is that not only bar women, but also women of other occupations involve themselves in commercial sex by becoming remunerated mistresses of wealthy men. When single women visit the bars, which some do, they strongly signal their readiness for a sexual adventure and of course some extra money to supplement their income from trading or other activities. Instead of showing up in a public place such as a bar, however, many Namanga women receive customers secretly in their homes.

A majority of intimate relations in Namanga, just as other encounters, are volatile and ephemeral (*mshikaji,* 'one to hold'). Other encounters may, however, become more permanent. In the Namanga context, any relationship lasting longer than six months is considered permanent and referred to as *hawara* relations. Some of the bar attendants had *hawara* boyfriends. In such a relationship the boyfriend pays the house rent and gives the woman money for food and clothing, while the woman reciprocates with sexual and other domestic services. This is a pseudo-marriage of sorts, with mutual rights and obligations. In such a relationship, the man normally will not allow his girlfriend to have sex with another man; the fact that he supports her economically gives him exclusive rights to her sexuality. Symptomatically, whenever feasible, he will pick her up from the bar at closing time.

Informants indicated that *hawara* relationships, however, were less popular and hence less widespread among single women in Namanga compared to, for instance, Mererani, a mining community further south where men outnumber women by a ratio of 70:1. Mainly due to the scarcity of women and the 'roughness' of that place,[4] the women living there are forced to seek male guardianship. While a *hawara* relationship gives a certain material security and social protection, a woman in Namanga, however, may earn more cash and enjoy a wider range of choice by getting involved in temporary relationships.

The materiality of women's sexuality surfaced again and again in interviews and discussions. In the words of one of the women, 'If he has money, he is welcomed.' This commentary was made with reference to the pastoral Maasai living in the vicinity of Namanga and whom town dwellers, not least the bar workers, regard as dirty, backward and uncivilised; in other words, the Maasai constitute the anti-image of the modern-cum-developed person with whom the female bar workers strongly identify. Among themselves, and in discussion with the anthropologist, the bar women, who in general were meticulous about their hygienic standards, elaborated on the 'dirt' *(uchafu)* of the Maasai. Their 'dirtiness' was above all linked to their ethnic attires and traditional way of self-representation which, according to the women, was a major reason why they were reluctant to entertain them sexually (Talle, in press). An intimate relationship with such a person would contaminate them, consciously bringing them back into *zamani* (the 'past'). As long as they pay well, however, which Maasai tend to do, traditionally not appreciating the value of money as people of the towns do, some women would not mind their 'backward' appearance or 'foul' odour. 'I will just put a *khanga* [wrap-around worn by women] above my face and let him do his work,' said one. After all, she has come to town in 'search of money' *(-pata pesa)*. Others adamantly insisted that irrespective of highly valued money compensation, they would never have sex with such a person lest they be disgraced and perhaps contract diseases. Most severely perhaps, a woman who is known to associate with the Maasai may ruin her chances with other men.

The Maasai, in order to compensate the women for their attributed dirtiness, will normally have to pay more dearly than other customers. The women rationalise their higher prices by bringing forward their clean and shiny bodies on which they have invested considerable amounts of money, buying and using soap and body lotion as well as expensive clothes and underwear. Quite literally they embody development, and the Maasai customers agree to reciprocate with money. Recently, even pastoral Maasai have begun to appreciate 'development'. A Maasai woman living in the villages beyond Namanga and married to a man who had three wives plus a mistress in town, solemnly declared that her husband was particularly attracted by the 'soft skin' of his mistress. In contrast to themselves, she explained, the mistress could offer him warm baths, regular meals and soft mattresses on which to sleep. Her husband, although a man without formal education but with ambition to be ‘forging ahead’, was attracted by the comfort and leisure that modern living offered.

The transactional ‘nature’ of extra-marital sexual relations has been amply described in the literature from many places in Africa (cf. for example, Caldwell *et al.* 1989; White 1990; Dinan 1983; Haram 1995). The exchange of sexual services for ‘presents’ *(zawadi)*—a notion more favoured than ‘money’ *(pesa)*—which may range from a bottle of soda to a piece of land, is firmly constituted in gender relations. Discussions with women in Nairobi (White 1990), Namanga and elsewhere in Tanzania (Haram 1995) indicate that the women themselves are very much aware of the transactional capacity of their sexual services. In fact, from an early age, many have been socialised into appreciating their bodies in terms of material value. The women of Namanga regarded presents as the major gratification of an intimate relationship. One woman, in fact, broke the relationship with her *hawara* boyfriend because she thought that the dress he had given her as a Christmas gift was not up to her standards. At least she would have expected ‘a dress of TAS 12,000, shoes 5,000 and underskirt 1,500’. She was very precise in her demands and the items she listed as a minimum appeared to balance well the services she had offered him. Even within long-term or permanent relationships the reciprocity between the partners is not of the generalised kind prevalent in marriages. The women praised European men for being ‘very generous with presents’, even though only one of the women had been lucky enough to have the company of a European man. Educated Tanzanian men stated, not without a stroke of distress I often thought, that a man, irrespective of ‘the size of his testicles’, cannot keep a mistress if he does not have money.

The pecuniary argument was also given as to why permanent boyfriend relations are not very popular with Namanga women, because in such relationships, the woman’s ‘income’ is at the discretion of the man’s wealth and/or generosity. Appreciating material as well as social security, some women, however, nourish both kinds of relations; while their boyfriend(s) is away or out of sight, they entertain other men. They refer to such illicit relations with the metaphor of ‘stealing’ *(-iba),* thus alluding to the risks and sanctions involved should such acts be detected. While quite a few of the women recounted their ‘illicit’ relations with great admiration for their own inventiveness and intelligence, showing no moral doubts in outsmarting their boyfriends, others were more apprehensive of the possible punishments following such acts.

There are men who, due to their economic and political resources, are more in demand as boyfriends than others. In Namanga the customs officers and police belong to the popular category and many of them kept several women simultaneously. By their central position in the border trade, they are particularly attractive for the protection they are able to offer their girlfriends who engage in trading or other 'illegal' economic activities.

The practice of women using men to enrich themselves is poignantly expressed in the way they characterise each other's relationship to men: *hapendwi mtu ila pochi tu* ('the man is not liked by her, but it is only the purse'), or the shortened *ni pochi tu* ('it is only the purse'). These somewhat coarse words reflect a very realistic attitude to life and also, I would add, crucial aspects of gender relations as they evolve in the particular case of Namanga. Furthermore, the money-sex transaction exposes women's vulnerable position particularly in the context of AIDS. The fact that they use sexual favours for maximising economic profit, and that they are surrounded by men with strong purchasing power, may sometimes leave them in a very weak position of negotiating 'safe sex'. Namanga men live by the convention that economic power gives them access to the sexual services of women; the fact that they 'pay for it' clearly tells them that they are in command. Not infrequently male informants boast that as they pay for the intercourse they want 'the real thing' (*-a uchi* 'naked') and refuse, for instance, to use condoms (cf. Overall 1992). Generous money contributions tend to keep women in Namanga at bay. The man of the hairdresser's story, infuriated by not getting his will, fell back on his physical strength. The hairdresser, however, did not give in to either her lover's beatings or wishes. In the act of resisting his advances, she defended her bodily and personal integrity. At a later stage she 'revenged' by telling her story aloud to a customer in one of the more popular saloons in Namanga, partly 'scandalising' the man for his 'immoral' sexual inclinations, but simultaneously underscoring her own subjectivity. This event is an exemplary case of female resistance.

Despite the fact that many of the women participate in multiple-partner sex, they do not employ a self-image as prostitutes; on the contrary the opportunities they presumably have to choose among sexual partners contribute to cultivating their self-image as modern people. The ability to be 'selective' *(-chagua),* in fact, is an important vehicle of self-esteem and the 'respect' *(heshima)* of others. Selective means the ability to say ‘no’, but also to make the right choice of sexual partners. One woman refrained from having sex with men from Kenya because they ‘travelled far’; another did not like to sleep with old men as she was afraid of contracting *homa ya kizee* (‘elder’s fever’); others were afraid of the ‘wildness’ of the Maasai. It was also regarded as inappropriate to take lovers below or above their own age group—that is, as ‘young as their sons’ or as ‘old as their fathers’. Women also risked being defamed and/or ostracised from a bar or community if they ‘stole’ the boyfriend of another bar woman. By being selective a woman does not only avoid risks of contracting diseases and social isolation, but also indirectly communicates her identity as a free and individual person.

Being attractive by consumption

The women are very conscious of their appearance: the way they dress, their hairstyle and general body care. Although not clad in the ‘latest fashion’ from the perspective of Nairobi, for instance, they have their own styles, being of equal importance to local differentiation and distinction as the elitist trends of Nairobi (Simmel 1957; Rabine 1997). Many of them, however, travel to Nairobi some 200 km away occasionally to conduct business or simply to allow themselves to be inspired by the atmosphere of a large city. In the eyes of the pastoral Maasai, who in most respects constitute a sharp contrast to Namanga standards of sophistication, the women have the primeval look of ‘town people’: they wear clothes accentuating their well-fed body form, have soft and shiny skin and radiate foreign fragrances (not always pleasant to the nose of the Maasai).

Within local discourses of development and modernity, single women, bar attendants included, are proto-types of the modern person (*mtu ya kisasa* ‘a person of today’); they pursue individualism (are ‘egoistic’ in the meaning of only thinking about themselves), are adventure-seekers and enjoy leisure (the work as a bar waiter is far less laborious and more rewarding from a woman’s point of view than the chores of the homestead in the village), drink beer in the company of ‘nice’ (*safi* i.e. developed, civilised and often wealthy) men of their own choice, eat food at restaurants every day, buy chic clothes, travel to other places, have their hair done regularly in the latest fashion at one of the several hairdressing salons in Namanga, use cosmetics (lipstick, nail polish) and expensive (‘foreign’) perfumes and so on. Furthermore, they associate with people from foreign places and different walks of life, go to the clinic for medical check-ups, are conversant with the use of condoms and are self-reflective on their departure from traditional values. Through the expressive consumption of goods and services, subjectivity and the management of self are enacted in a lifestyle of the town.

This lifestyle concept also includes modernisation of the intimate sphere towards 'romantic' love and appreciation of personal experiences (Giddens 1992). Any bar woman in Namanga expects her partners to know how to 'do romance' *(kufanya romans);*[5] a 'woman' wants to be entertained with beer and roasted meat, hear sweet words spoken, be fondly caressed and openly desired. And a man who does not know how to 'satisfy' a woman, economically and sexually, is regarded as a 'country bumpkin' *(mtu mshamba).* Symptomatically, young Maasai men with modern ambitions and attraction towards town life are eager to learn how to handle the bar workers, and the novices consult those with more experiences. Material contributions notwithstanding, the women—themselves 'professional' in eroticism—have ambitions of being 'emotional' in the intimate relations as part of 'realising' self and identity management. Most notably, in contrast to more virtuous women, they take an active part in the love-making act by 'moving their waists' *(-kata kiuno),* wanting their bodies to be fondled, having sex in a lighted room. Above all they have sex for leisure, that is 'whenever they themselves want', and are ideologically not dictated by money. The transactional aspects of their sexual life do not in any way exclude discourses on moral principles and preferences of style. The local definition of a prostitute in Namanga is a woman who has a high number of sexual partners (she is 'promiscuous'), who is not selective and who tends to receive any man without consideration of mutual attraction. She is blamed for selling her body purely for money, which although many of them do—not only women in the bars, we should note—is considered ideologically wrong. In the words of one of them:

> 'Prostitutes' are women who do not say no to anybody at any time. Such women sell their bodies openly and the rate per ejaculation is known to men. It is business, it is not *sex for leisure*. You can find such women in the big hotels only waiting for men.[6]

By the way she performs her work, cares for her body and self and manages social relations, a bar woman has social space for manoeuvring. Above all it is important not to give the impression of being 'loose', a concept which is associated with sloppy body care, impolite talk and negligence of personal conduct. In a place such as Namanga, where relations are fluid and norms and standards of behaviour creations of the moment, bodily cleanliness becomes a minimum factor for guaranteeing moral respectability. A clean, shaved, perfumed and well-dressed body is a physical enactment of a 'civilised' person *(-a staarabu),* signifying urban sophistication and glamour as well as respectability and, in times of AIDS, trust. A beautiful woman is a moral woman. In the eye of the beholder she is attractive.

For the female bar attendants expressive consumption and care of the person are important strategies both to gain money and to present themselves as developed and currently informed persons. For women there is nevertheless a delicate balance between autonomy and material gains. Certainly they have come to town to earn a living, but equally they have come to get away from male authority and find something new in willed, inter-subjective encounters. In colonial, as well as present-day Africa, women themselves have initiated their detachment from collective entities and in the process they have carved out alternative self-images and identities articulating with specific and localised modernities. Pioneering detachment of the individual and venturing on subjective forms of femaleness, women working in bars of Namanga act as 'agents of modernity'.

Notes

1 This study resulted from AIDS-related research conducted among the pastoral Maasai who inhabit the rural hinterland of Namanga (1991–4). My acknowledgement to the staff of the Tanzanian-Norwegian AIDS Project (MUTAN). From the study in the rural villages the assumption was made that HIV transmission into the pastoral communities would largely depend upon the kind and frequency of contacts between them and people in places like Namanga. Some Maasai, when travelling to town, are involved in sexual relations with the women living there, in particular with female bar attendants.

2 The prevalence among the male bar workers, constituting about 45 per cent of a total number of 787 workers, was conspicuously lower, slightly below 6 per cent, and hence corresponds more closely to the prevalence level of the general public in Moshi town (Klepp *et al.* 1995).

3 Women who are found serving at the counter in the bar are said to have an intimate relationship with the bar owner. In order to handle money, she must be trusted by the owner.

4 The 'roughness' of Mererani was attributed to the pronounced dominance of men in the place and the boisterous and violent lifestyle of the miners. The gem stone tanzanite which was excavated in the area is particularly popular

among tourists, although its market value fluctuates. The prospects of earning quick and large amounts of money had attracted adventurers from all over Tanzania and beyond. The mining activities were carried out under extremely dangerous conditions with a minimum of technology, a fact which contributed to the semi-wild atmosphere of the place and the workers.

5 The first time I heard this expression was in Namanga. When I later confronted a highly educated Tanzanian friend of mine with the expression, she immediately replied with the wording *kufanya mapenzi* ('to make love') thinking I had not understood well its meaning. When she learnt that I had understood, she added, it is only *watu wa mjini* ('town people') who use this expression.

6 She was referring to big hotels in places such as Arusha (about 100 km away and the largest town in Northern Tanzania), Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Namanga did not have any hotels of the kind this woman had in mind, which underscores the 'othering' of her argument.

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Chapter 4

State vs. locality

The new Slovene—Croat state border in the Upper Kolpa valley

Duška Kneževic

The Upper Kolpa border locality: a brief history

The Upper Kolpa valley is a narrow canyon approximately 30 kilometres long and surrounded by high steep walls. Technically, there are two rivers: the uppermost section is the Cabranka, the tributary stream of the Kolpa river which enters the canyon at the town of Hrvatsko on the Croat side. The two rivers, however, share the canyon, which is thickly overgrown with what has been systematically preserved as virgin forest for the past eighty years. The preservation regime was first articulated in *Hufnagel's Plan* of 1920 (Hartman 1992:110). Writing in the early nineteenth century in the Austrian derived and popular tradition of *Heimatkunde,* the geographers and historians of the older generations saw the valley as a 'natural' border site (cf. for example, Melik 1959, 1963).

The geography of the valley has indeed made it suitable for a political border (see Figure 4.1), given the defence techniques of past centuries. Active political delineating processes in the valley took place several times during the Middle Ages, most notably during the decades of 'Turk danger' to the Austrian Empire. At the time, the Empire sought to populate the region's war zones with refugees from the inner Balkans who fled the advancing Ottoman army. Thus, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries came the *Uskoki,* groups of Orthodox, partly nomadic people. Many families in the region still claim descent from these medieval migrants (Rus 1939; Simonic 1939).

Although minor revisions often took place, following the delineation, among aristocrat estates and the imperial administration of provinces, the border line following the flow of the Kolpa river was graphically documented as early as 1744.[1] In medieval times, the valley was the site

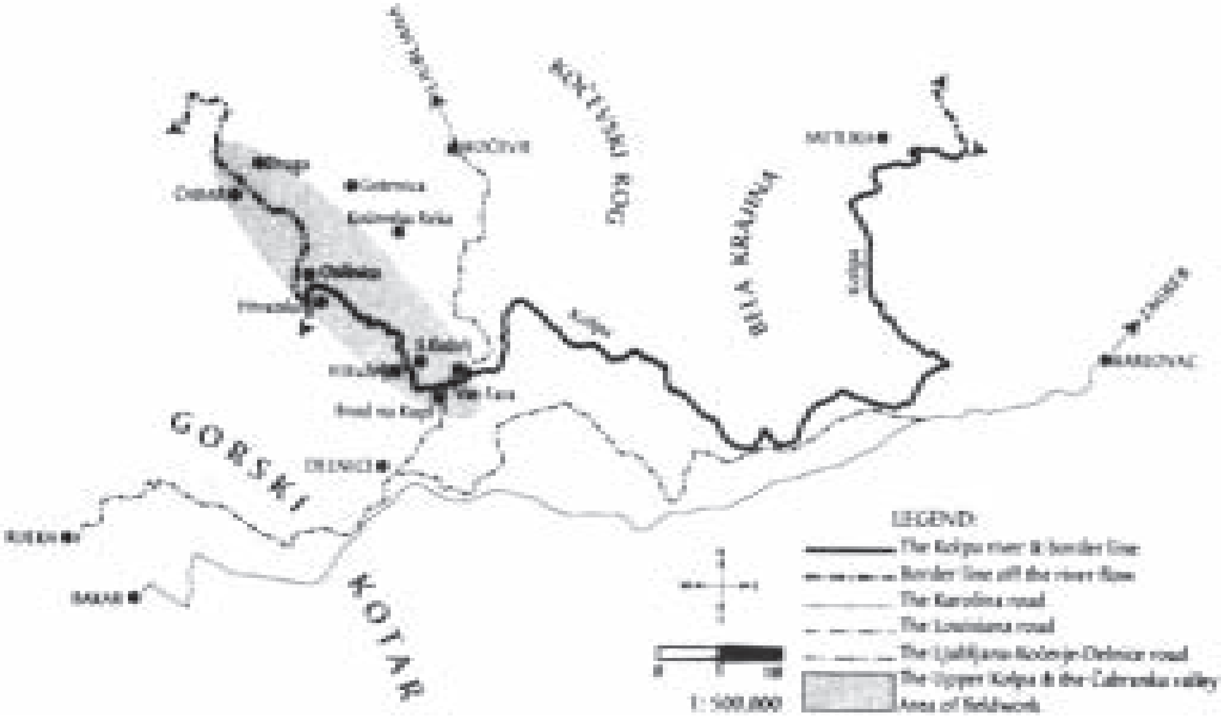
KOČEVJE
KOČEVSKI ROG
BELA KRAJINA
METLIKA
Kolpa
KARLOVAC
ZAGREB
Brod na Kupi
Fara
DELNICE
RIJEKA
BAKAR
GORSKI KOTAR
LEGEND:
The Kolpa river & border line
Border line off the river flow
The Karolina road
The Louisiana road
The Ljubljana-Kočevje-Delnice road
The Upper Kolpa & the Čabranka valley
Area of fieldwork
1 : 500,000

Figure 4.1 Map of the Upper Kolpa locality

of the border between the Holy Roman Empire and the Hungarian Habsburg estates. In the Napoleonic times, the valley was a part of the French Illyric Provinces. The Kolpa was a border river between the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Empire following the Dualism of 1867. After the formation of the first Yugoslavia in 1918, various towns and settlements in the Upper Kolpa valley were changed, from Croat to Slovene and vice versa, but the river largely preserved the role of border. A radical, albeit short-lived change came with the Italian occupation in World War II, when the valley was claimed to belong to the broader hinterland of what was then the Italian state. Such episodes aside, the first Yugoslav state confirmed the region as the site of an 'administrative' border for seventy or so years to come: after 1945, the valley became a section of the border between the Federal Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, in place of the old Yugoslav border between the *Dravska* and *Savska banovina*.

The Austrian authorities kept the region difficult to access by cutting it off from both its hinterlands. It was not until the early eighteenth century that a road suitable for cart transport was built by Kaiser Karl VI. This road connected the valley at Brod na Kupi with the nearby major town of Kocevje on the present day Slovene side, but was asphalted only in 1975, after a long series of rebuilding during the course of two centuries (Žagar-Jagrov 1983:116–23). On the Croat side, it was also Kaiser Karl VI who, in 1727, instigated the building of a road to connect the broader area with the Adriatic coast. This road, however, named *Karolina* in honour of the emperor, bypassed the valley at considerable distance; it connected the town of Karlovac with Rijeka at the coast. Another road built in Napoleonic times in 1810 and named *Louisiana* after Louise Bonaparte likewise did not connect with the Kolpa river, although it did come closer (Karaman 1981:127–9, 138). The first Yugoslav state also kept the valley isolated. As for local connections, tarmac roads and bridges mostly linked the settlements cross-river; to travel along the river, one had to take stretches of roads on alternate sides between bridges. The most recent local roads, however, are those connecting the settlements along the river banks. On the Slovene bank, such a road was built and asphalted only in 1994; on the Croat bank, patches of the road are still incomplete. These roads became necessary due to the new state border: settlements that were for centuries connected cross-river now had to be linked along the border line.

Farming land in the valley has always been scarce, and sawmills employed only seasonal labour. Therefore, the people in the valley and its immediate vicinity obtained an Imperial Patent for free trade and peddling as early as 1492 (Ferenc, M. 1993:21). Until the early years of the twentieth century, peddling throughout the Empire was a major source of income for the families in the Upper Kolpa valley. But the valley never saw any particularly rich times; permanent economic emigration to remote destinations such as France, the USA, and Argentina was a steadily increasing trend from at least the 1890s. Between 1870 and 1970, the population on both river banks was halved (Žagar 1981:192; Crnkovic *et al.* 1981:207; Žagar-Jagrov 1983:35–8).

Additionally, several developments of a more grisly nature unfolded on the Slovene side after 1940 that further vacated the valley and its surroundings. During World War II, the valley's immediate vicinity was subject to the Hitler-Mussolini policy that enforced 'ethnic cleansing' along the borders of the Italian state and the Third Reich, forcing the population to choose between citizenship of one or other state. In April 1941, autochthonous German speakers of the nearby Kocevje, then under Italian rule, chose to move to German territory. As a result, 12,147 persons (around 95 per cent of all Kocevje's *Volksdeutscher*) were relocated under the conditions of the 1939 Pact[2] on 31 August 1941 (cf. Ferenc M. 1993; Ferenc T. 1995). This depopulation in the heart of the area's best farming land badly damaged the local economy and the efforts of Italian authorities to repopulate the region with Slovene refugees from the German part of occupied Slovenia were only partially successful. After the war, the Communist regime did not offer to repatriate the Germans; in 1952 and 1953 their home villages were, instead, turned into two adjacent top secret military bases, Kocevska Reka and Gotenica. As a consequence, large parts of the area were made off limits. The bases, monuments to a paranoid political elite, were opened to the public only in 1991 after the fall of the Communist regime. The Gotenica base with its vast underground facilities was intended as a refuge for Slovene political leaders and their kin in case of counter-revolution, foreign invasion, nuclear attack, etc. Indications are, however, that the region was intended to serve as an emergency resort even earlier. According to one testimony,[3] the very villages along the Kolpa river were to become such refuges for the political elite, should an emergency arise, following Yugoslavia's 'no' to Stalin in 1948. The denseness of the Kocevje virgin forest, Kocevski Rog, is also the site of the 1945 massacre and secret burials of around 20,000 anti-Communists, Nazi collaborators and civil and military refugees who were forcibly repatriated after World War II and executed, without trial, by the Communist regime.[4] The vicinity of the military bases and burial sites added to the economic sterility of the valley as the restricted area encompassed a large part of the Slovene river bank, thus cutting off the Upper Kolpa valley from the region of Bela Krajina to the north-west, while the connections with the central Slovene region, the Ljubljana basin, remained poor.

The ethnic border

With the rise of national emancipation ideologies in the second half of the nineteenth century and the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in sight at the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue of ethnic borders became critically important throughout the non-Germanic part of the Empire. The task of the day was to draw clear ethnic, 'national' division lines. The state of Southern Slavs was formed in such historic conditions that there was no doubt about separate, distinct 'national' identities of its constituent peoples: the Slavic-speaking cultural and political elites in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade had already hammered this point home in the early 1800s. In the broader region of the Kolpa river, the goal was to prove that the line of ethnic division coincided with, and was as 'natural' as, the political one.

The academics involved had to deal with unwelcome and confusing facts. There were, as there are today, two distinct spoken languages in the valley which meet roughly halfway between Osilnica/Hrvatsko and Slovenski Kuželj/Hrvaški Kuželj settlements. The Upper Kolpa valley, cut away from both hinterlands, comprised a tight economic and cultural community, where people generally intermarried cross-river. Moreover, the spoken language of the entire area of Gorski Kotar was, and is, largely a variant of the so-called Kajkavšcina, a type of speech very similar to spoken languages in the territory of Slovenia.[5] On the other hand, the Kolpa river had indeed marked the standard language border between Croat and Slovene since at least 1874 when a special decree established Croat as the standard teaching language within the Croat-speaking parts of the kingdom of Hungary (Mance 1981:151). On the Slovene side of the river, Slovene-medium primary schools were established between 1858 and 1885 (Žagar-Jagrov 1983:129).[6]

The retrospective investment of nation-building, or rather, nation-delineating linguistics and historiography had to employ complicated theoretical manoeuvres in order to reconcile these facts. Certain historic events provided the necessary background for scholarly speculations in the 1920s and 1930s and in some cases even later (Strohal 1932;

Barac-Grum and Zecevic 1981:217–24; Barac-Grum and Finka 1981:419–31). In the period between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, at least two sizeable migration waves from Austrian and German provinces hit both river banks. A lasting impact on the region's population came into being when iron ore was discovered in the vicinity of the present-day town of Cabar; the mines were excavated from 1651 when the local landlord, Petar Zrinski, established the first ironworks facility in the area. Then, seventy or so years later in 1727, the aforementioned project of building the *Karolina* road was undertaken. Both these economic enterprises brought with them changes in the valley's population. Miners, woodworkers, stonemasons, and the like arrived from Primojc, which is now the Croat coastal region Slovenia, Czechkia, Slovakia, and from as far north-west as Bavaria (Laszowski 1923:43; Kruhek 1981:302). The similarity of language on both river banks was seen as having been developed in a series of immigrations, emigrations and re-migrations, but in such a way that the linguistic core of 'primordial' Croat settlers, as well as their biological substance, remained 'pure' throughout these events. The spoken language on the Croat side was therefore 'proven' to be of Croat stock, although sounding almost exactly like the spoken language on the Slovene side which, in turn, was supposed to be of Slovene stock (cf. Južnic 1983:174ff., 1993:287; Lisac 1991). In other words, it was important to insist that the very similarity of both tongues somehow developed independently of each other. Such ontological essentialisation of ethnic ascriptions, 'blood lines' and language was by no means exceptional; it was, rather, a variance of a common intellectual game of the period.

Establishing the international border

The flow of the Kolpa river (known as 'Kupa' in Croat) comprises 110 of the total of 546 kilometres of the former administrative and current international border between Slovenia and Croatia. The Kolpa becomes a border river at Osilnica in the Upper Kolpa valley and parts from the border line into Croat territory near the Slovene border town of Metlika.

In 1991, this entire section of the border was deemed incontestable by both politicians and public. First, there was the underlying principle of transforming administrative borders as they were at the time of separation between former Socialist Federate Republics; both Croatia and Slovenia adopted this rule. Second, the Kolpa had been a border river from ages past. So much so that in Slovenia, the phrase 'border on Kolpa' had become something of a battle cry of vulgar secessionism: Thus for instance in 1989, in a flood of provocative gestures against the federal state from the part of civil associations, the media, and the developing political opposition, a tin badge appeared in Slovenia that bore the inscription: ‘When I grow up, I’m going to be a customs officer on the Kolpa’.[7] The statement declared in no uncertain terms the division line between the ‘civilised European’ part of the dying federation and the ‘primitive Balkans’.

Given such public perception of the Kolpa river area, it came as something of a surprise when a series of complaints arose from the Upper Kolpa valley in 1991, addressed to both Ljubljana and Zagreb, revealing much dissatisfaction with the new border. People were facing unprecedented troubles in their daily routines. Because of (at that time, exclusively) cross-river road connections, in some cases farmers had to cross the international border no less than four times to reach their farming lands on their own side of the river; comparable adventures threatened shoppers, visitors, walkers, and tourists. The hitherto well-functioning distribution of primary schools in Osilnica, Vas-Fara, and Cabar became meaningless. Although children were never formally prevented from continuing to go to the nearest school, which was more often than not across the river, the parents now felt that it was safer to have them go to the nearest school in their own country. Such reasoning was well grounded: the children who had overnight become foreign citizens in their school could no longer apply for stipends, and issues such as routine insurance of children and safety responsibilities of the school became moot, given that no legal mechanisms were prepared ahead of time. In a number of cases, shifting to the nearest school on one’s own side of the river meant a walk of an hour or more in each direction every day (Štamcar and Sever 1991:18). Equally grave complications befell the local medical care system. Emergencies from both river banks were hitherto directed to Cabar, but with the new border, the patients on the Slovene side had to be rushed much farther to the town of Kocevje. Banking became virtually impossible with the new currencies, and cross-river payments, both state and commercial, came to a halt for several months. The newly introduced customs duties instantly suffocated all small-scale exchange of goods. But even the only two large Slovene state-owned enterprises, one on the Slovene side, and one on the Croat side, which manufactured wood furniture and heavy machinery for wood processing and employed a total of 150 workers, faced enormous difficulties. This concerned not only importing raw materials and issuing payments, but also keeping their employees; many from the Croat side were drafted or volunteered into the army. Even the telephone and electricity installations were not spared the confusion as the systems overlapped considerably.

The mere discomfort caused by the political rearrangements of local living space, though considerable, was not the core of complaints, nor was there much explicit objection to the border itself, or doubt as to its inevitability. Underlying the recounting of these afflictions was the observation that ‘before we were as one, and now we are divided’ because ‘the border causes hatred’. According to early newspaper reports, the locals saw two possible solutions: either the valley as a whole should be annexed to either Slovenia or Croatia, or the border regime should be immediately radically liberalised (Štamcar and Sever 1991; Šprogar 1992). As will be shown in some detail below, the initial research in the valley confirmed this insistence of the locals on the notion of cross-river ‘oneness’, while the effects of the new border were nearly unanimously judged negative. Of all the interviewees on both river banks, 3 per cent thought that the border brought only advantages; 7 per cent that it brought neither advantages nor disadvantages; 13 per cent that it brought both; but 77 per cent thought that it brought nothing but disadvantages.

There was little reaction from the political centres to the locals’ complaints. While the problem necessarily appeared marginal in Croat public life at the time given the ongoing war, and the media hardly reported on it at all, the responses of the state representatives and political elite in Ljubljana to these complaints ranged between two extremes. A high-ranking official of one of the Slovene Ministries was driven into exasperated observation that ‘these people are unfit to understand the concept of sovereign state’, as they ‘come and burden the state by making nuisance of themselves and their petty problems’.[8] A more practical-minded Slovene nationalist party leader, however, read the dissatisfaction as no less than proof of the existence of a Slovene minority on the Croat side of the Kolpa river.

Fieldwork investigation

Fieldwork was planned along the lines of some initial reflections. Firstly, what ‘kind’ of a border are we dealing with in the Upper Kolpa valley, given that it is simultaneously a border ‘from time immemorial’, and very ‘new’? The locals, as will be shown below, experienced it as a ‘real border’ only from 1991. I have translated this apparent paradox into studying if and how the new international border affects the perceptions of belonging to the locality; in other words, I have set out to test the oft-voiced complaint of the locals, holding that before the international border, they were ‘as one’, and now they are ‘divided’.

The methodology chosen for this preliminary research was a survey questionnaire. The results were quantified and interrelated in order to provide a probe study for forthcoming anthropological fieldwork. Data compilation was twofold: first, I endeavoured to locate the ‘overt’ similarities/dissimilarities as perceived by the locals; secondly, I tried to disclose the more ‘covert’ relationships they sustain among themselves, a task limited by the nature of the method selected, but hopefully sufficiently credible to allow for some initial speculation.

Second, the above question can be turned around. Since the Upper Kolpa valley is a border site ‘from time immemorial’—no living generations would remember a time when there was no border—the differentiation between Croats (*Gorani* in local parlance) and Slovenes *(Kranjci)* is historic and well established. The latter term, *Kranjci,* is an archaic near-synonym for Slovenes, since the largest province populated by Slovene speakers in the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was *Kranjska* (*Crain* in German, *Carniolia* in Latinised version). *Gorani* is likewise a near-synonym derived from the name of the broader hinterland of the valley on the Croat side, the Gorski Kotar.

What ‘oneness’ is summoned into existence, or referred to, given this firm identity differentiation? What does it consist of, and what is the relationship between these two identity statements? Initially, it seemed that this particular relation must in some historically fortified way be negotiable and shifting. The research tried to encompass the structure of these effects in two ways. First, a hierarchisation of spatial-symbolic loyalties was established by presenting the interviewees with a set of choices ranging from the settlement of their residence to the nation-state. Second, the language was treated as the primary communication means, and therefore the primary communicator of social borders. A series of questions was put in the questionnaire pertaining to language, given that a historic differentiation and a distinction in social position obviously exist between the local spoken language and the two standard languages, Slovene and Croat. Next, I set out to determine the extent of linguistic loyalties of the valley inhabitants, since linguistic loyalty could arguably be treated as a form of political—in this case, national—loyalty. Finally, explicit ‘national’ (self-) ascriptions were sought.

Fieldwork was carried out between August and December 1993 and started with a series of unstructured in-depth interviews. Employing the so-called snowball technique, I identified individuals who were, according to the locals, 'most knowledgeable'.[9] The numerus was determined on basis of these interviews and comprised sixty persons, thirty on each river bank. They were selected according to their places of living in the four pairs of settlements along both river banks: Draga/Cabar, Osilnica/Hrvatsko, Slovenski Kuželj/Hrvaški Kuželj, and Vas-Fara/Brod na Kupi.

In the process of selecting individual informants from these settlements I had to rely on local circumstances. The 1991 census enumerated 114 persons in Draga; 79 in Osilnica; 58 in Slovenski Kuželj; and 36 in Vas-Fara. On the Croat side, Cabar had 597 inhabitants; Hrvatsko 72; Hrvaški Kuželj 49; and Brod na Kupi 176. These data are of course not accurate for obvious reasons (such as a number of discrepancies due to natural demographic changes in the course of nearly a decade). Also, there would normally be an unknown number of people registered as permanent residents of these settlements but who actually lived elsewhere. And more importantly, there was at the time of fieldwork a sizeable discrepancy on the Croat side because of the war. The chosen disproportional quota sample was therefore by necessity informed by the census data in terms of gender and age, although it was too small to render statistically significant correlations for all the variables tested in the research.

The data gathered with the questionnaire were analysed with a series of uni- and multivariate methods of statistical analysis (the analysis of frequentation and distribution, discriminate analysis and grouping). The questionnaire included two sets of questions. In the first set, there were closed questions furnished with answers ranging from positive to negative. These were formed in accordance with the tendencies identified in preliminary interviews and furnished with a scale of descriptive evaluations. The second set were open questions.

Research results

I first sought to verify the statement 'before we were as one, now we are divided' with an analysis of perceived intensity of cross-river contacts among the people both before and after 1991. Categories describing the purposes (types) of these contacts were extracted from the preliminary interviews with the locals and were systematised as: family/kin; business; work-related; festive; friendship; shopping; leisure; mutual aid;

sports. These cross-river contacts could be ticked off as: regular; frequent; sporadic; rare; none; never had any.

According to the interviewees, the contacts on both river banks have dropped significantly in all neighbourly relations since 1991, most drastically in those described as 'leisure' (a drop from the 'frequent' mark to 'sporadic'), and a comparable one-level drop marked business and shopping contacts. Although there was a drop in every category of contacts, there was a statistically significant and very telling minimum drop in family/kin, festive and friendship categories. The latter went down a mere half a level. It would therefore seem that the new border affected primarily those categories of contact that are most susceptible to system changes (business, shopping), while family/kin and friendship, though perceptibly reduced, remained the basis of cross-border communication.

Next, I tried to establish whether there were differences in the perception of quality and quantity of the contacts prior to 1991 on one river bank as compared to the other. Statistically significant differences were determined in the evaluation of business, friendship and shopping contacts. Business contacts were marked 'frequent' on the Croat side while 'rare' on the Slovene side; friendship contacts were marked as 'frequent' and bordering upwards on 'regular' on the Croat side, while merely 'frequent' and bordering downwards on 'sporadic' on the Slovene side. Shopping contacts were likewise highly evaluated on the Croat side as 'frequent', while they scored two marks lower, 'sporadic', on the Slovene side.

A comparably significant difference was not found with reference to the post–1991 contacts; these estimations were more or less uniform on both banks. This indicates that on the Croat side, the people perceived themselves as more affected by the border imposition, specifically in the areas of leisure, business, shopping and employment. There too, friendship and kin relations appeared to be the least affected, while leisure and festive contacts appear to have been nearly completely abandoned. The rather dramatic drop in the publicly manifest intermingling indicates an altered spatial perception of 'home' area in affective, not in state-territory terms; it would seem that the perceived 'home' area was shrinking.

To verify this, the informants were requested to determine the borders of the Upper Kolpa valley as they see it in terms of their 'home' area. Several factors were accountable as informing their opinions: the fact of two different spoken languages in the valley, as described above; the geographic orthodoxy according to which the Upper Kolpa valley proper begins at the settlement of Osilnica; last, but not least, a person's lifestyle and range of spatial frequentation may have shaped this perception. The informants' answers bounded the 'home', or else, the 'us' territory in the range anywhere between 5 and 50 kilometres along the Kolpa; two-thirds of them, however, judged that their 'home' territory expands between 13 and 37 kilometres along the river; most of these informants included the Cabranka valley as well. The diversity of these perceptions was such that no less than sixteen different places were enumerated as determining the north-western border, and eighteen as delineating the valley to the south-east. Locals on the Slovene side, however, tend to pose these extreme boundary points relatively higher in the north-west, and lower in the south-east compared to the interviewees on the Croat bank, but the difference was not statistically significant.

The quantification of the 'home' area was closely related to the criteria used for the analytic grouping of the informants from both river banks. They were asked to scale preferentially their identification with the following localities: own settlement; the local community;[10] the country; own river bank; both river banks; the state. The discriminate analysis of these responses extricated three primary groups: the smallest, in which the informants identified primarily with the state; the middle group, that preferred all options to 'both river banks'; and the largest group, which preferred 'both river banks' to all other options. The latter group was of central interest to the investigation, and was characterised by: a larger share of highly educated persons in comparison to the other two groups; a larger share of persons older than 56 years, and with a correspondingly larger average of lifetime spent in the valley; and the largest share of persons who explicitly identified themselves as Croats. These group characteristics, however, are meaningful solely in correlation to other variables tested.

The (self-) ascriptions in terms of local designations and names were a further step in the research. A set of questions in the questionnaire asked about naming the people on the opposite river bank, self-naming, the perception of difference/similarity between themselves and those on the opposite river bank, and the difference/similarity between 'all Slovenes/ Croats'. A most striking result was the fact that fifty-six out of sixty informants viewed their cross-river neighbours as 'more like us' than anyone else offered, 'all Slovenes/Croats' included. In other words, 93 per cent of the informants designated all the valley people as more like *myself* than like (any other) Slovene/Croat.

Cross-referencing the results of self-naming with the naming of cross-river neighbours, the following interesting information was extracted: while self-naming after the settlement of residence is prevalent (forty-eight cases out of the total), the same was not quite true for naming the people on the opposite river bank. While still frequent, naming after the settlement was followed closely by naming after the 'nationality', both in the form Slovenes/Croats and in local near-synonyms, *Kranjci/Gorani* (in a total of twenty-five cases). In other words, while a person named themselves primarily after the name of the native settlement, their cross-river neighbour was in around 40 per cent of cases perceived as either Croat/*Goran* or Slovene/*Kranjec* before anything else. Although the differences between the river banks were not statistically significant, more people on the Croat bank designated themselves according to nationality and more people on the same bank designated their cross-river neighbours with the national name, 'Slovenes'.

The next question asked was: 'Is the language in your settlement identical, similar or different from that on the other river bank?' A majority of forty-three informants thought that everyday language in the valley was so similar, with differences so minor, that an outsider would completely fail to register them. Roughly a fifth of the total (thirteen) responded that the language is identical, and only a minority (four cases) insisted that there are distinct everyday languages on respective river banks. There was, however, a significant difference in evaluating the spoken language 'nowadays' as compared to 'before' ('in the time of our parents', 'in the old days') towards growing differences: a majority of respondents felt that currently the languages are merely similar, while they were identical in the past.

Pinpointing the 'culprits' for the growing dividedness, the people in the Upper Kolpa valley on both river banks quoted the unpleasant formalities connected with the international border (currency differences, customs checks, public transport difficulties and delays, cross-border employment procedures), and, second, the degradation of intimate and social relations cross-border. Typical are statements such as: 'there is no more friendship as it was, no mingling'; 'mutual relations have chilled considerably'; or, 'one feels one is being watched all the time'; 'one is ashamed to stand at the customs office time and again'; 'one does not feel free anymore'; 'one cannot go across at any old place like before'; 'one feels like a criminal standing in front of the policeman every time'. These statements do not readily include the concrete explications of the estrangement: rather, it is perceived as somehow 'automatic'.

Perhaps a most ready type of speculation as to the ‘reasons’ for this alienation is in the implications that the cross-river neighbours have changed in the face of the new circumstances, that they have indeed reacted inadequately to them. They have ‘become envious’, for example, and ‘the spirit of nationalism is very much felt’. Furthermore, the informants have in many instances felt that envy, self-importance and stinginess of their cross-river neighbours had really always been there, but that they only became obvious with the new border: ‘Croats have always been jealous of us Slovenes’, or ‘Slovenes were always tight-fisted and kept to themselves’. In many cases, informants quoted local stereotypes, pejorative jokes and folk verses that seem to be endowed with new meaning, as if they have somehow ‘come true’.

There is a series of gleeful verses containing absurd statements such as ‘Croats are thieves, what shall we give them, a sack of buckwheat, so that the devil abandons them’. The main attraction of this kind of piece is apparently in the fact that they rhyme: *Hrvati so tati/kaj cmo jim dati/eno vreco ajde/da jih vrag obajde;* that they include a priori insulting terms like faeces, names of unclean animals, and the like, in association with the addressed; and that they were, reportedly, traditionally recited as warm-ups preceding fights among local youth. Also, there is a series of pejorative proverbs stating, for instance, that ‘all *Kranjci* are meaty like oxen’ or that they are ‘all…either [physically] strong or idiotic’, whereby the main feature is likewise an effective, artistically satisfying expression, the meaning itself secondary. However, the informants have in several cases quoted such pieces of folk wisdom as substantiating or corroborating the view that the neighbours have in one way or another become different or worse. This ready adoption of categorical thinking was also generally recognised as a novelty in the valley. Nearly all informants agreed that ‘the border causes hatred’.

Some concluding remarks

To go back to the initial speculations as to the situation in the valley and the relationship between local and national (self-) identifications, the problem of ‘national identity’ is of course a most delicate subject to translate into operational methods of research that would yield to quantification. To sum up, a very useful interpretation of the problem, national identity, is at the individual’s level closely tied with the category of citizenship (as identity). Citizenship, on the other hand, is a legal institution that defines a relationship between the state and the individual—a relationship that can be described as embedded in a specific ‘trick of (mutual) confidence’ (cf. Južnic 1993:329–30). This ‘trick of confidence’ involves complex mutual loyalties that assume a coercive nature on the part of the state, and that in turn greatly affect the individual’s self-perception and behaviour in terms of ethnic, linguistic and ‘national’—that is to say, ideological—identity and loyalty. In the Upper Kolpa border locality, the ‘trick of confidence’, or in the words of Grillo (1980:10), the ‘constructed salient difference’ of nationality shared by the state and the locals was, so to speak, consummated even before the border imposition, in the time-honoured and ideologically secured notion of the ‘naturalness’ of the valley as a border site. And one must not forget that the issue of national loyalty, in the case of Upper Kolpa valley, the issue of a just and indisputable border, presented itself in the height of mobilisation and over-communication of nationalist ideologies.

The widely assumed ‘naturalness’ of the border on the Kolpa in political and public discourses in both Slovenia and Croatia confronted the people in the border locality with a specific problem that was poorly understood outside the valley. On both river banks, the people largely thought of themselves as sharing the same culture, the same language, the same economic difficulties if not a living, thriving economic web, and furthermore, they viewed themselves as a complex conglomerate of intermarrying kin groups. Individuals within these structures could be (self-) identified as either Croats or Slovenes; this terminological pair stood for (self-) ascription that was in the local context evaluated as ‘smaller’ than others, for instance, the membership of one or another kin group. Whatever traditional, historic, superimposed (formal) linguistic and ‘administrative’ delineations existed prior to 1991, the people saw as viable, undisturbing and essentially immaterial to their economic and social life. The statement that the national (self-) ascriptions are in the local context ‘smaller’ than others has to be read in the sense of A.P. Cohen’s remark on the differing complexity of ‘ascending’ vs. ‘descending’ levels of self-presentations (1982:10). This increase of complexity downwards, Cohen saw as ‘very much more of a cultural reality than is association with gross religion or nation’, a point that Anderson (1983) has brought home so triumphantly.

Within this primary realm of cross-river socialising and intermarrying, the differentiations such as Slovenes/*Kranjci* and Croats/ *Gorani* with many additional sophisticated distinctions served as a descriptive array of communicating primarily the various aspects of the social standing of persons thus designated. Being educated in two different standard languages which are, to be sure, nevertheless mutually perfectly intelligible, and to be formally indoctrinated, through school, with two different national histories, obviously played a secondary role in the lives of the people of the valley.

The most obvious state of affairs that motivated the research, and that was exposed by the survey presented here, was twofold: that the acceptance of the international border in place of the preceding 'administrative' one was never manifestly questioned; and second and paradoxically, that the new border was uniformly seen as an obstacle causing divisions of such nature that the primary social resources in the valley were threatened. Despite the fact that questions seeking informants' opinion as to the state previous to 1991 were inevitably answered as past projections, as their constructed version of the past, the changes they perceived remain a telling social fact. Their complaints seem mainly to be directed towards a threatening radical reorientation of their everyday practices and their life strategies. Before 1991, the Kolpa river had clearly functioned, in the absence of strong hinterlands, as a means of communication, not as a divisor, facilitating the formation of a closely bound social universe to which superimposed divisions were of little relevance. This primary social axis was in 1991 fatally attacked. One could say with Barth's classic formulation (1969) that the essential societal boundaries and their maintenance were shifted to match the state boundaries.

With the installation of the international border, a specific buzz became manifest between two distinct discourses: that of the locality on the one hand, and that of the nation-state on the other. Dwelling on a simplified understanding of the fact that loyalty to respective nation-states, and loyalty to the locality was, on the surface of it, equally present in the valley, both new nation-states simply translated the historical existence of two different standard languages into that of a'national' division. Characteristically, 'national' was in the political context read as synonymous with both 'ethnic' and 'cultural'.

To deepen these qualifiers a step further, both state nationalisms, typically, read the local 'national' designations 'Slovene' and 'Croat' respectively as an accomplished national loyalty, ignoring the fact of different, and in this case, not at all coinciding, daily-life meanings invested into them by the people of the Upper Kolpa valley. Of conclusive value in this argument is the logic of the state itself when identifying the 'problematic points' along the Slovene-Croat border: thus far, eight such points have been identified in the process of bilateral negotiations which concern the historic and legal record pertaining to the *border line,* and wherein the type of self-understanding of the people of Upper Kolpa valley (the self-understanding typical of a *border locality*) simply does not and cannot count given the logic of nation-state; within this logic, it cannot even be recognised.

By 1997, the Upper Kolpa valley had changed substantially in comparison with 1994. The roads along the Kolpa on both river banks were completed, or nearly so. The many improvised bridges across the river that neighbours set up for their comfort were torn down or went out of use. Their use is now prohibited by the law; larger bridges are few and all of them are now the sites of double police and customs border controls; the border regime is set and recognises customs relief for the border area inhabitants within a certain radius. The overlap in the school system was resolved and has stabilised; so have overlaps in other sectors. While I hope to shed some light on individual perceptions of the changing situation with my ongoing research,[11] it is clear that it remains a matter of time before the growing division between the two river banks finds overt public expression.

Indeed, this may already have started. Only in August 1997, an association (*Društvo za Kostel*—the Association for Kostel) was established on the Slovene river bank whose explicit goal is to repopulate and economically revive not the valley as a whole, not the Slovene river bank as a whole, but the area of the historic estate of Kostel. This area comprises the immediate hinterland of the border village Vas-Fara; the goal of the association is to establish the separate County of Kostel. In the written material that substantiates their goals, neither the Kostel history, spoken language, economy or demography are contextualised with the valley as a whole, and no mention is made of the other river bank.[12] It would therefore seem that the new border successfully mobilised the potential of the partial and exclusivist ‘self-stories’; there are few indications that the 1994 cross-river ‘oneness’ can compete or, indeed, that mobilisation towards re-affirming the old social boundaries is in sight.

Notes

1 Florjancic de Grienfeld, Janez Dizma: Dvcavs Tabvla Chronographica, IVSSV, Sumptuque Provinciae Statutuum, etc. (1st edition). Cca 1:100.000. Ljubljana, 1744. Original preserved in the National and University Library (NUK), Ljubljana, sign. A IV-52.

2 The Hitler-Mussolini pact of 23 June 1939 first applied to South Tyrol (Alto Adige) and Val Canale (Kanaltal) in present-day Italy. Similar international

agreements were signed between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, and the Third Reich and Romania.

3 The testimony of Dušan Grum, construction engineer, before the Parliamentary Commission for Research of Post-War Mass Killings, Juridically Indeterminate Processes and Other Irregularities, 7 November 1990: Slovene State Assembly Archive. Magnetogramme.

4 The repatriated refugees were prisoners of war of the British occupation force in Austria. These events from 1945 were recently widely publicised with the work of the British historian Nicholas Tolstoy, as were the ensuing polemics and the court trials.

5 The three types of Croat and Serb spoken languages as determined by linguistics of the nineteenth century are *štokavšcina, œakavšcina* and *kajkavšcina* after the word for 'what' (*što; ca;* and *kaj* respectively). As Central European nation-building processes relied heavily on linguistic arguments, an early speculation held that this triple systematisation is the delineator proper among Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. The historic process of nation formation, however, unfolded differently.

6 In other parts of present-day Slovenia, all under Austrian imperial rule and divided among five provinces, Slovene language was taught in primary schools as early as 1805. By 1848 however, standard Slovene was encoded, as was a well articulated political programme for autonomy of Slovenes within the Empire.

7 *Ko bom velik, bom carinik na Kolpi.* Details of this episode can be found in the book of memoirs of the ex-Chief of Police of the Republic of Slovenia (Celik 1994).

8 In personal conversation with the author. The interview with the state official and member of the Governmental Commission on State Borders took place three years after the fieldwork reported here.

9 It should be noted however that this category of informants does not match the statistically useful concept of 'opinion leaders' since the selection criteria were different.

10 A local community is, in Slovenia, an administrative unit smaller than a county and largely concerned primarily with neighbourhood issues.

11 My PhD fieldwork was largely completed in September 1997. The title of the thesis is *Boundaries in the Upper Kolpa Valley: Identity Management through Kin Network*.

12 Vršnik Franci, Valentin Južnic and Martin Marinc (1997) Študija *o utemeljenosti obcine Kostel (Arguments for the establishment of the county of Kostel: A study);* plus the association's Bylaws and programme leaflets.

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Chapter 5

From economism to culturalism

The social and cultural construction of risk in the River Esera (Spain)

Gaspar Mairal Buil and José Angel Bergua

Introduction

In 1991 we undertook a qualitative research project about the River Esera. With the help of another colleague from the Sociology Department at the University of Saragossa (Spain), it took us about two years to complete this task.

The River Esera flows south from the summit of the Pyrenees and meets the River Cinca in north Aragon. Both rivers flow into the Ebro basin. The waters of the Esera supply irrigation through a large network which extends across the plains of Aragon and Catalonia. In 1976 the Spanish Ministry of Works decided to build a new dam to increase the flow regulation in the Esera as the existing regulation furnished by an old dam, Barasona, was not sufficient to meet irrigation needs in the system. This project, the Lorenzo Pardo Project, named after a brilliant Spanish engineer, involved the construction of a large dam with a storage of 600 hm^3. The project also involved the flooding of several villages whose total population then amounted to 600 people. Houses, buildings, fields, woods and all property had to be expropriated and the population displaced.

In July 1976 the inhabitants of these villages—Campo, Morillo de Liena, Navarri and Las Colladas—heard of the ministry's project for the first time through official notices. They reacted immediately and in August expressed their firm opposition. They quickly gained the support of political organisations and public opinion at a time when Spain was in the throes of transition to democracy and dam building was automatically identified as typical propaganda of the Franco regime.

The project was hotly debated for several years, strongly supported by powerful irrigation associations and rejected by local people, nationalist and ecologist movements and left-wing parties. Even political institutions such as the provincial and municipal governments expressed their opposition to the scheme. Over a long period of time discussion groups were organised in an attempt to find alternative projects, rounds of negotiation and demonstrations in support of and against the project were held, a boycott of elections was organised by those affected by the project and various other actions and discussions took place. Finally, in 1986, the *Confederación Hidrográfica del Ebro,* the Ebro Basin Water Authority, rejected the project, which they had proposed ten years before, on the grounds that the social impact of the dam was too severe. At the same time they adopted a new project with the same objective but with a smaller capacity, about 160 hm^3.

This project was called ‘Comunet’, after the name of the dam site, and had a certain number of specific characteristics. It was to be a collateral dam, not built in the river bed but in a valley not far from the river. This new construction would involve some land expropriation but no villages would have to be flooded. The dam was to be made of earth, not concrete, and this specific point became a bone of contention, quickly generating an opposition movement. According to this project, the clay to be used for the dam would be extracted from land belonging to Capella, a village about 20 km from the dam site. The proposal was to extract 60 cm of clay below the topsoil of agricultural land, which would have to be removed and replaced after the clay extraction. The expropriation offer reached one million pesetas per hectare, a good economic proposition. The owners, land cultivators, sought an independent valuation from an expert, a university professor, who assured them that the project would cause the land to lose its fertility for about one hundred years, effectively forever. This revived opposition to the project, strongly supported this time by neighbouring villages and expressed in similar episodes: protest actions, demonstrations and even a general strike in the area. Nevertheless, this local opposition movement did not gain political and public support, as circumstances had changed. The political parties in the region were now much better organised and in control of local councils, thus managing to moderate the protest. Finally, they were accused by the organisations opposing the project of being obedient to their regional and national leaders, who wanted the dam to be built. This was notably the case of the Socialist party, the main political force in this region at the time. In Aragon, public opinion was no longer primarily interested in local issues which had been the central ideological mark of identity of an Aragonese nationalist movement then in decline. There was an important difference between this conflict and the previous one, betwecn 1976 and 1986. The earlier conflict had been generated at a moment of transition when the old authoritarian regime was being eroded by political advances in Spanish society, but the new institutions proper to democracy had not taken root and in some cases had yet to be created. These were times that favoured self-organisation and local movements. On the other hand the general political context led the opposing groups to become more aggressive and there was considerable verbal aggression.

In 1992 the administration decided to turn down the Comunet project on technical and economic grounds. Without publicly recognising it, they came to accept some of the opposition groups' arguments and in particular the argument stating that a collateral dam could not regulate the flow. After a short period of discussion on new alternatives, they proposed a new project called 'Santaliestra', the name of a village in the surroundings of the new dam site, for a dam with a capacity of 70 hm^3 to be built in the river bed. No village would have to be flooded, and the loss of agricultural land and woodland was not great. The same project had been put forward two years previously by those opposing the Comunet project, who had taken the trouble to offer suggestions for alternative projects in order to reinforce their actions.

Economism versus culturalism

It was at this juncture that we began our research, in response to a request from the Ebro Basin Water Authority, who were interested in assessing the social impact of the latest project. Our first visit to the area revealed the need to get all the relevant factors into perspective from the start if we were to understand the problem. It was not simply a matter of measuring the impact of the latest project, but of measuring the interaction of the various projects and their social reverberations over some sixteen years, from 1976 to 1992. We used the concept of Risk Perception Shadow (RPS)[1] to categorise the phenomena. Over a period of sixteen years, a perception of risk, induced by projects for dams, and its logical consequences was present in the minds of a population who considered themselves affected by the various projects. Our aim was to study this conflict in order to understand the local perception of risk, as this was the main social impact of the projects. We engaged in fieldwork in order to grasp the meaning of the local population's perceptions, concepts and actions. We visited the area over different periods, talking to people, meeting with experts, local politicians and community leaders. We also amassed a substantial amount of information from the archives of local town councils, press, documents and magazines published by the Public Administration, by political parties and by associations of those affected. Nevertheless, our main source of information was a number of interviews held with people affected by the project and people involved in organised opposition in all the villages concerned. These interviews had different purposes. The first set of interviews was geared towards local people in general, the second set was directed towards those who participated more intensely in the opposition movement and became leader figures for the whole community. The analysis was based on a comparative study of all the resources that we had used in order to produce a final ethnographic text.

Our starting point lay in the following basic consideration: that people construct risk from culture. According to this assumption and leaving aside the type of risk that can be scientifically quantified by the natural sciences, there is another sort of risk which is developed by individuals, groups, communities, etc. and which has to do with cultural experience and can be assessed by social science. Both risks are valuable and must be taken into account. Whereas all large projects in Spain are nowadays required by law to undertake environmental impact assessments in advance, the matter of social impact is seldom examined. Our hypothesis was, then, that the failure to assess this kind of impact, socially experienced in terms of risk, had played an essential role in the escalation of a permanent conflict in the dam zone. It was quite clear that the administration had misunderstood the problem. We found here that one practical objective of our work was that of transmitting information on a whole world of experience, as felt by members of local communities, to the administration, not in order to proclaim a single truth but simply to define new conditions for consensus.

The first question to be answered was: How do people construct risk? We decided to go to the area and try to read the ideas, concepts, emotions and sentiments which the affected people had developed. A large reservoir implies the destruction of space and so the basic issue as far as the administration is concerned is a contractual one in terms of expropriation. Space becomes an object which can be bought and sold. This is the starting point and the basic principle of economism.[2] We, on the other hand, wanted to understand what space meant to the people in those communities whose land was to be expropriated. In our attempts to do so we found a complexity of ideas, values, concepts and sentiments expressed in symbolic terms which we felt might succinctly be expressed by the term ‘culturalism’, thus counterbalancing ‘economism’, although perhaps the term is not a very orthodox one. In any case the justification for the use of this term lies in specific circumstances.

Social impact is defined primarily through risk as perceived and constructed by the community, and second through the disorder and social disarticulation induced by risk. We never considered final impacts as we were always facing projects and not actual work or *faits accomplis*. A basic consideration, then, is that projects have a potential to create risk, disorder and social disarticulation, simply by becoming known to people who might be affected by them. Affected people perceive the impact of hydraulic projects, such as dams, in terms of cultural risks as they are aware that such projects threaten their very survival. This experience was placed in cultural contexts such as land *(tierra),* household *(Casa),* village *(pueblo),* region *(comarca)* and territory *(país)*.[3] At the same time these kinds of experience were articulated through a reactivation of memory and sense of identity. In this way the villagers elaborated a discourse of opposition, charged with emotion, to be used primarily within their own communities. Sometimes they presented this discourse to their opponents, of which the following is a good example. In an open letter, Campo’s[4] local council addressed the associations of irrigators in these terms:

> We are people who want to live in our land which we deeply love, as you love yours; we are people who have built up a living community, with our families, neighbours and friends, jobs and livelihoods, traditions and customs, festivities, games and vernacular, and we live in the midst of the memories of our ancestors.[5]

In this ethnographic text we find a local community under the pressure of events, making an effort to define itself and in doing so stressing its deepest links with space and culture. When we tried to understand the collective perception of risk that was attributed to these projects, we realised that its cultural construction was very rich in emotive evaluations concerning the household and family, the land, the village as a living community, all within the creative process of reconstructing the past. As far as the supporters of the projects were concerned, the area to be flooded was measurable and could be bought and sold on the basis of its market value, whereas for the affected people it was nothing less than a cultural space that was not susceptible to any kind of economic transaction.

This discourse of opposition to the project, internal to local communities, was constructed with strong symbolic density. The projects and their consequences were objectified in potent metaphors of illness, agony and death. Their own belongings, such as household, land, etc., were also symbolised, but this time in terms of survival. Consequently, there was a vivid clash of images referring to death and life. The risks associated with the projects were set off against an emotive reconstruction of the past, an attempt to remake what villagers considered their own into a continuum of recollections: 'my ancestral home that has been standing there forever', 'the land which my ancestors passed on to me'. These are examples of the local discourse which we labelled 'culturalism'.

In a time of conflict, when several communities felt pressurised by dramatic events and since their very survival was at stake, the fact that they made use of the collective memory to form an argumentative discourse is of particular interest. They tried to link everything that they wanted to survive directly with the past. These collective memories, activated within each village, had the effect of reinforcing the opposing positions and creating an emotive background against which the local defence movement developed its struggle as though it were in 'enemy' territory.

At this point we found a remarkable shift which effectively moved the affected population's associations from the area of culturalism to that of economism. This is the fact we wish to consider in this paper. The affected people's movement came to realise that they could not simply gather culturalist arguments for introduction into a general discussion that included all sides because this kind of discussion does not exist. The state uses bureaucratic and political spaces for its discussions and in this forum only economic, technical and legal arguments are accepted. First they discuss the economic benefit attributed to a project in terms of development; second, the technical characteristics in the configuration of the projects are considered, followed by the legal procedures required to reach the conclusion of the work. Outside this framework any other argument is inappropriate or irrelevant. This framework can be imperative due to its legal foundation, the principle of public utility. The legitimisation of this principle lies in a fundamental conception of democracy based on legal equality: in order to benefit a majority it is permissible to risk damage to an individual or a group of individuals and then make appraisal of the damage done and do justice accordingly. This principle must be random in its application, presupposing that those harmed can in future be benefited by a process which ideally should turn out to be a 'round trip'. According to the affected people, the effective perversion of this principle and, by extension, of democracy, lies in the fact that they are always harmed and never benefited. Sometimes the state opens its framework as a result of public opinion pressure if the opposition minority have gained sympathy and support. This was the case in the River Esera when the first project was rejected. The state and administration are the agents who activate this framework, but they maintain alliances with other forces which have found good protection of their particular interests therein. This is particularly the case of the irrigators' corporations, called *'sindicatos'* (unions) in Spanish.

Thus it was that when the opposition movements were born, they transferred their opposition arguments to this economic, technical and legal framework which was so detrimental to them because it was not their own. In the Esera river the affected people's movement used both technical arguments and a definition of alternatives as the main elements in setting up an opposition agenda. We called this action the 'argumentative detour'[6] because the affected associations were using arguments which were not theirs; they had in fact to use the enemy's arguments and to do so in the enemy's terrain. They had to defeat the 'other' (administration, irrigators, political parties, etc.) with their own weapons. Nevertheless the deep sentiments which gave root to the opposition among affected people were culturalist, the common experience of cultural risks. A clear paradox was evident here: culturalism was acting within communities to give support to the economistic actions of the leaders and associations that were talking, discussing and sometimes negotiating with the administration and the irrigators.

The 'argumentative detour' was a strategy adopted with a view to winning. Nevertheless the conflict had deep meaning in the confrontation between culturalism and economism. The villagers evaluated the situation from an intense symbolic and affective matrix whose bottom line was life and survival, whereas the administration displayed various economic, technical, legal and political principles from a rationalist matrix in order to give coherence to all the projects. If the affected people organised their sociability on a scale which started from household and community, for the administration the scale began with the individual.[7] If land was evaluated by villagers in terms of survival, for the administration it was merely merchandise to be exchanged. While for the villagers territory was the country or Aragon, for the adminis tration it was the nation-state. This was the fundamental misunderstanding, as both parties were using different codes. The opposers, having discovered that their will to live in the place was not accepted in the framework designed by economistic principles, were forced to refute the projects in these alien terms.

Placed in the framework, the affected people used new arguments which displayed their interpretation of democracy. The first was territorial solidarity, which expressed the need for a new consensus. Both territories, Highlands and Lowlands, were equally committed to promoting a fair exchange. Nevertheless, they came to different conclusions: the projects showed how the administration never values both territories on equal terms. The irrigators' land is worth more than that of the affected people because, in order to increase its productivity, the villagers' territory has to be flooded. They offered what they called a fair exchange by accepting some of the impacts and some of the projects with compensation in the name of local development. Instead of these proposed development actions there was only a monetary offer based on land value estimates. We must note the cultural meaning of the term 'territory' when used in this way. One's territory is valuable as it symbolises belonging and all 'belongings' must be equal.

A second argument refers to dialogue. The affected people's movement has always shown their willingness to dialogue, but they have also expressed their frustration when the administration has imposed the principle of public utility and does not recognise the villagers as a partner, but admits the irrigators into the institutions like the *Consejo del Agua,* (Water Council). At the same time the villagers have very often criticised the way in which the administration conceals basic information about its projects. Finally, they state that their opinions have no value for the administration. All these attempts at discussion were frustrated as a result of different interpretations of democratic rules, an imperative interpretation based on a strict use of law in the case of the administration, and an open interpretation in which the role of minorities is stressed in the case of the affected people.

At this point the opposition movement, having failed when they agreed to participate in a framework for discussion which they did not consider theirs, and having tried to introduce their own interpretation of legal principles and democracy into this framework, resorted to technical criticism to highlight the failures of the projects. At the same time they promoted other actions like strikes, demonstrations and boycotts, now beyond the boundaries of normal procedures. The villagers tried to move from culturalism to economism, hoping to find a place there and finally realising that the place was not theirs. Tactically they continued to be economistic in order to discover the contradictions of economism from the inside and thus to be in a position to determine alternative possibilities. In fact the latest project, 'Santaliestra', was put forward by the opposition movement which had rejected Comunet.

Our conclusion, made from an analysis of the conflict, takes the opposite trend: the administration and other allies must now shift from economism to culturalism. This study was the result of a request by the Ebro Basin Water Authority. We therefore had to clearly define a conception of our work and above all of our role in all these events. In the first place, we knew that our presentation to informants and villagers had to be sincere and of course we always informed them of the origin of our funds, while at the same time indicating that our work was part of an independent research project at the university. We had a considerable amount of trouble and received some refusals from people who considered the administration as 'the enemy'. However, we were eventually able to solve these problems by using certain arguments and in particular by stating that the origin of our funds was the public budget. We undertook to give a copy of our study to local councils, which we did after having negotiated this condition with the Ebro Basin Water Authority.

We saw initially that the regulation of the River Esera had been an unsolved problem for a long time, in fact from 1976 to 1992. With several projects which had failed, it seemed that the main reason for this failure, together with other circumstances, had been the permanent conflict existing in the region. The administration did not understand the conflict and the people in charge, most of whom were engineers with strong technical minds, were quite confused. We realised that our work would be justified if we could take the world of the experiences observed in our informants to the administration. The task consisted of translation work, decoding the affected people's discourse. We now see this work of transmitting worlds of experience, especially from local groups, communities or minorities to bureaucratic or political organisations and to the public opinion, as a basic trend for public anthropology.

According to our previous analysis one could say that the affected people's attempt at argument was frustrated because of a different interpretation of democratic rules. A pessimistic reading of events would affirm that there is a basic antagonism between the two codes of values. From a different point of view we believed that there was a possible solution based on a new effort developed by the administration to coincide with the affected people's endeavour, which meant shifting from economism to culturalism. It was certainly difficult to make such a hasty shift, but a first step was soon proposed by villagers' associations. While it was difficult to reach their emotive matrix, it was not so difficult to approach the interpretation of the democratic rules assumed by them. The thing to do might therefore be to recognise the affected people as partners,[8] to establish permanent communication channels and consider their arguments. By doing so, water policies would be more complex but less controversial.

In this way it was possible and desirable to make progress and this meant adopting culturalist principles. We then estimated the need for consensus between both sides and specially between highlanders[9] and lowlanders, considering that the views of both were cultural, as they were defining their identities and future. Lowlanders never act by using their own culturalism, because they know that in this context their arguments are weak, so they are culturalist but act as economistic under the protective umbrella of the state. Highlanders act as culturalist and activate the collective memory and identity to protect themselves from the state.

Negotiating development

The context for all these actions was the implementation of development in a rural society dominated by agriculture and tourism. Highlanders have experienced that this development, based on hydrology, is contrary to their interests, so they criticise it, using actions such as reinforcing memory and identity, which they feel favour their position. Here we could show a definite conception of economism and culturalism which goes beyond their relationship with culture or economy.[10] They exist as different attitudes towards dominant development, the kind of development which is generally introduced into local communities by the state. Feeling that this development damages their own lives, some communities act against it and build a new configuration of their own culture from inside, as a defence resource. On the other hand, other communities, when they experience that this development favours them, remake their culture by bringing in from outside values which they see as central in the development models. Economism is the term we use to characterise these principles as they are present in local cultures. We wish to make particular reference to the belief in accumulative economic growth, to the reconversion from community values to individualism, to the presence of new business behaviour, to the belief in technology, etc. In this context peasants and farmers become businessmen. This change is especially evident in territories in which irrigation has been very successful.

In any case we are faced here with a crucial question in terms of development negotiation. This is the basic demand made by the affected people and certainly the state is not prepared, in general, to negotiate such a matter, though it is essential to any democratic conception of development. How might it be negotiated? The first negotiation must be between territories, in the encounter between the culturalism which comes from the highlanders and the economism from the lowlanders. This negotiation should be a cultural encounter, as both territories are claiming the same thing, that is, the future. The basis for this encounter is to turn development into a cultural matter, which it is, as the events in the River Esera have clearly shown. For a long time a technical strategy to regulate this river failed because the administration and its allies never understood that the local population was experiencing these projects in terms of cultural risk, and that they wished to remain in the place with which they identified so deeply. The space to be flooded was their culture. This assumption is generally inseparable from a democratic conception of territorial development.

The second negotiation must unite the administration and the affected people, thus providing an opportunity to shift to culturalism. We wanted to define the breakdown in negotiations in these circumstances since, having studied the problem, this was the main conclusion we could offer to the administration. The starting point was to promote consensus and for this purpose the affected people’s demands were crucial. There was no set programme, but we were in a position to consider the demands expressed by our informants.

On 29 December 1991, after a meeting between mayors and representatives of the Campo area, the following communication was made public and reported in the regional press:

> Following detailed examination of the situation caused by the latest action of the administration regarding the regulation of the Esera…the Mayors of Esera and Isábena and the provincial deputies for Ribagorza agreed unanimously to establish a permanent principle according to which any regulating action in these rivers must be planned without the flooding of inhabited population centres.

Together with this principle, we took many of the opinions transmitted by our informants during interviews and group discussions into consideration.

The first demand was a condition for all the others, and involved the affected people's refusal to negotiate any form of compensation. From their culturalist experience they firmly refused any expropriation offer. Their demand was to negotiate regulation conditions, as they considered themselves a significant part of the programme to regulate the river. Over a long period they have accumulated a good knowledge about hydraulics and were in a position to formulate consistent critiques and even alternatives based on sound information and technical advice. Their conditions were formulated according to several principles inspired by their culturalism. The first condition is survival and as such is opposed to any flooding of villages or houses; second, a revaluation of their territory with a request for development in terms of new roads and a tunnel through which to cross to France; third, an equal exchange so that the regulation of the Esera might benefit them too, with hydroelectricity production for the communities, new irrigation on the river banks and other projects to improve tourism activities. In summary, they were defining their egalitarian concept of development.

We now include the conditions that we considered basic in order to determine the negotiation gap, which as a whole expresses the ultimate position that we could sense in our informants. One can see here a wise blend between culturalism and the conception of local development, a further example of development as a cultural issue. At the same time these conditions showed the technical knowledge about hydrology which these people, who had been engaged for a long time in hydrological conflict, had acquired.

1. They rejected the inundation of villages or houses.
2. They demanded economic compensation, not only in terms of an economic appraisal of properties but in terms of the household surviving as an economic unit.
3. They demanded the construction of a new dam in the river bed.
4. They rejected projects which had the negative effect on territorial connections of blocking the main roads. This is a crucial point in mountain valleys, as roads run alongside the rivers.
5. They demanded the right to the use of surplus flows existing in the irrigation system. They also requested a new water-saving strategy in the system as a new option for reducing the regulation needs.

6. The damage might also be compensated by a benefit obtained from water regulation, as water must favour both those who lose out and gain by the changes. They requested irrigation, new industry, hydroelectric production and new investment in tourist activities.
7. They demanded an immediate definition of projects so as to do away with uncertainty about the future.

In 1992 in the Aragonese parliament all the political parties voted for a new agreement called *Pacto del Agua,* (Water Agreement) in which they defined the future of new hydraulic constructions and irrigation in Aragon. The Santaliestra project was one these new constructions. The Spanish government adopted this agreement and in 1992 the Minister of Works declared that they were ready to include it into the *Plan Hidrológico Nacional* (National Hydrological Plan) which was then being discussed. Had it been accepted in the Spanish parliament, it would have become the basic instrument for water policy in the future.[11]

In this text there is a brief reference to social impact and to the interests of the affected people. One might consider this an initial approach to culturalism, but as yet it is rather timid.

> As far as possible the flooding of inhabited settlements will be avoided. If it is unavoidable, the fairest and most generous possible measures will be implemented in order to compensate the affected people.
>
> (Water Agreement)

There is a calculated use of conditions in this text and it seems that this pronouncement is at some distance from the affected people's position, which is restricted at this point. The need for culturalism stands firmly.

Today this conflict is still alive. The works for the construction of a new dam in the Esera river have not yet begun (1997) and the future of economic constraint imposed by the European Monetary Union does not offer a brilliant horizon for public investment. It is worth asking oneself if it will be possible in the immediate future to build any large construction with an infrastructure such as this, the cost of which was estimated in 1992 to be 21,500 million pesetas, or 153 million dollars. In these circumstances there exists the possibility of this dam being built by a private enterprise which would subsequently exploit this concession and substitute the state. If this were the case, for the first time in Spain's hydrological history, this new kind of privatisation formula would become imperative.

Recently the Ebro Basin Water Authority took the initiative of prompting a Development Plan for the Esera Valley. Taking the study performed by ourselves as a reference to assess the social impact of the Esera, this institution intends to undertake a new strategy defined by the setting up of a plan of development and land restitution before the work begins, as is indicated in this text, made public in December of 1996:

> The Plan for the Development of the Esera valley aspires towards turning the current valley-mountain tension into co-operation and interrelation. In the same way as the waters descend into the valley, the just and generous compensations and the means of communication must reach up the mountains.
>
> (Ebro Basin Water Authority 1996:2)

On the basis of this document, preliminary conversations have begun between the administration and the town halls of the affected communities. It is too early yet to know how this new process, which displays certain significant changes compared with the previous action performed by the administration, will turn out. However, on the other hand, there is a confrontation about the situation of the dam, which is currently blocking any possibility of agreement. The administration has prepared a project for the dam in a situation that is rejected by those affected, who propose a different location situated nearby, upstream. Thus, there is still tension in the air and, in the light of recent events, the formulas designed to combat the social impact caused by the building of the Santaliestra dam have become useless in the face of the latest confrontation.

We nevertheless tried to study a conflict which showed the cultural significance of risk, induced by the application of technology to society, and also the experience of local communities, all within the comparison between an historic model, the Water Policy which is promoted by the state, and the alternative concepts of those really affected. Within this development model, water becomes the central object of value and as such is intensely symbolised. Discourses for argument are articulated around this symbol. The conflict existing today in Spain with regard to water is the result of a variety of discourses and of the confrontation between them. Indeed, the semantic fields activated by the term 'water' today have to do with the political controversy that took place after the exposure of and public debate on the National Hydrological Plan, and also with the correction proposed by the different autonomous communities, and the constant criticism expressed towards both sides by the ecologist movement. Seen from this view-point, the water conflict gives rise to the confrontation of various discourses responding to different interests and ways of interpreting the dangers to be dealt with, the safety to be reached and the risks to be considered. The institutional discourses of the central state and the autonomous governments are 'economistic' since they underline the economic exchange value of water. With their arguments they recall a certain 'social contract', based on the principle of reciprocity and signed between the parties that make up the Spanish state in which everybody has to take part in 'giving' and 'receiving'. In this way, they conjure up the danger of reciprocal Hobbesian violence, but they also produce the risk of the exchange system moving away from balance and becoming surplus or deficit, and in this way of antagonism appearing once again between the parties. The discourse of the ecologist movement is 'biologistic' in that it gives great importance to the ecological exchange value of water. With their arguments they allude to a 'natural contract' between the social system and the natural ecosystem. But if the exchange ceases to be symbiotic and becomes parasitic—whereby everything is taken from nature and nothing returned to it—there is a risk of nature breaking its contract with us, one of its creatures, and of us disappearing.

In the face of these discourses, there are other water experiences that occasionally give rise to discourse that is just as scientific and rigorous, or at least intends to be, through which peoples of cultures that are different from those of the elite actually live the water question. One of these experiences is formed by the values that those affected by the planned water works display when they perceive the risk of their lands or houses being flooded, and this was precisely the object of our attention. A second experience which will have the opportunity of being translated into a discourse supported by a certain elite pressure group, is that of farmers who are in need of water, and to which we have also made brief incidental reference. A third experience could be that of consumers of drinking water, who associate such consumption with hygiene and food requirements. In these experiences, despite the fact that concepts and scientific arguments pronounced by the elite can be borrowed, in order to give greater credibility to certain protests or demands, the emotive symbolic angle is particularly significant. Our intention throughout these pages has been to show one of these experiences in some depth: the culturalism of those affected in the River Esera and its relation with another kind of discourse, the ‘economism’ of the state. In another vein, it is also of interest to see the globalisation of this same situation within the political framework of the state and, in this case, of the Spanish State, in order to contemplate all the parties involved. For this reason we wished to make a brief analysis of the intervention of the different governments, both central and autonomous, the ecologists, those affected, the beneficiaries and the consumers. The negotiation of any matter concerned with development and water in Spain is a crucial issue in any development strategy and should first undergo clarification of the deep meanings of all the discourses and all the experiences. Our intention was to demonstrate the role ethnography can play here.

A situation of risk

The initial intention of studying social impact led us to reflect the underlying risk and to discover what the interactivity between them was. In this way, it can be stated that clearly located risk, more than the perception of a given situation, is the sociocultural construction of this situation, and from here it can be understood that the Society of Risk, rather than a metaphor among many others, may be a new way, as yet unborn, of theorising on the advanced industrial societies that demonstrate in multiple and increasingly numerous contexts a configuration induced by risk construction. It is on these lines that we find a parallel between the results obtained from this research and the general propositions contained in the work of Ulrich Beck (1992) who for us is the most interesting of all the risk theoreticians. Risk is a political object because the tensions generated around it contribute increasingly to delimiting the exercise of power in contemporary societies. Our experience within the framework of direct research was precisely to reveal that the construction of the risk protagonised by a group of communities arose from the very exercise of power by the authorities. In our times, society is risk-producing and it is not outlandish to think that in the future risk management and distribution will become the central axis of political society. The characterisation and delimitation of risk as an object of study, which seems so necessary, has to do with its politicisation, since its construction by society comes about in a political context, that which determines how the risks will be distributed.

In any event, this question poses problems that are essentially concerned with the democratisation of risk. The risk built by society must be examined because it becomes part of the conflicts that arise in situations of risk. To ignore this reality is to close one's eyes to the causes of opposing reactions. Democracy must guarantee public discussion of all collective risk experiences and in this way broaden its limits. The future of advanced industrial societies also depends on their capacity to progressively extend the limits within which democracy is practised, thus making way for the solution of the fresh problems that arise.

In the course of our research we were also able to see the damaging effects of the administration's negative consideration of the risk sensation experienced by those affected. Its denial, on referring to it as fallacy, exaggeration or ignorance, contributed to intensifying the conflict. The result of all this was that, over twenty years, the administration was incapable of regulating the River Esera, thus demonstrating its impotence. We always believed that they never understood what was happening. Risk must be defined by society at all levels, community, local, associative and territorial, technical and scientific, political and administrative, in order to situate all its versions at the centre of debate, discussion and negotiation. In the River Esera, it was precisely our purpose to transmit the affected people's version to the administration. It seems that this may be a good objective for an anthropology of public affairs. Thanks to ethnography we are in a position to transmit to the large organising apparatuses, for example to the state administration, the experience accumulated by society in its day-to-day action, in its spheres of sociability, in its spaces of identity, in its times configured by memory, in its usual practices, whether it be in the household or in the small community, in regions, valleys or cities, and thus create knowledge regarding that small, anonymous, personal and human 'other'. Globalisation will lose meaning if we do not look for it in its ways of acting in relation to the life of so many anonymous beings.

Our initial view of the regulation of the River Esera led us to observe how the riverside population of Esera had considered itself affected throughout over fifteen years, without any work or expropriation having been performed. In this way, the social impact came from the projects or from the formal or public announcement that they would take place in the future, and not from the consequences of the population shift, of the flooding of lands and villages or any other of the effects that usually accompany the building of a dam. It was in these circumstances that the phenomenology of risk arose. We were faced with a population which in some cases had considered, and in others still considered, that something they did not wish to happen, the expropriation and flooding of their communities, was going to occur. It is true that with this characterisation there are many daily situations that could be assessed in terms of risk and, furthermore, that this experience is inherent to human beings. Fear, threat, insecurity or danger are basic experiences that are present in our lives. To a large extent this was the purpose of the theory developed by Mary Douglas when she took generic risk or an abstract notion of adverse happenings as the object of her study. For this reason her proposals were not very useful for on-the-spot risk research. In order to make the concept of risk operative at this point it was necessary to clearly mark its extension and even its nature.

There is a scale of risk which reveals appreciable differences. One difference is the degree of certitude concerning the possible occurrence of something undesirable. Moreover, there are risks that are perceived but are diffuse, and others which, on the contrary, turn out to be very specific, for instance the possible building of a dam. Some risks are assumed with a degree of freedom and others are imposed; there are also risks which are experienced collectively, as against others which are of an individual nature. All of these are characteristics which enable the nature of risk to be defined: its certainty, its precision, its imposition and its generalisation. On the spot, we were able to observe how the affected populations had installed the risk at the very centre of their lives. When they discovered that it was the state itself that was promoting the carrying out of future works that it supported on the grounds of general interest and public utility, they discovered that powerful political and social forces existed which supported this project on the grounds of its economic viability. Faced then with the use of a technique, hydraulic engineering, which was perfectly well developed and operative, risk, as experienced by those affected, was already situated on a very real and concrete scale. This meant that we had to confront situational activities and objects of risk. The public action of an administration and the representation of an object, in this case a dam, turned any abstract and generic notion of risk into a concrete situation. In this way it was possible to contemplate not only the existence of the risk, which is a question referred to particularly by risk theoreticians, but also the responses of the affected collectivity.

This is why in the research of risk phenomena it is essential to move from its generic definition, risk in itself, to a more concrete definition, and in this case we propose that of *Situations of Risk,* as we understand this is how the existence of a risk that possesses sufficient density to be researched on the spot is delimited. The development of a general theory on risk will be possible if one advances in the direction of validating our general propositions with the direct research in constant dialogue between theory and practice. Social anthropology may undertake the ethnography of whatever number of risk situations are relevant.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Tim Bosman and Claire McNamara for their help in the correction and translation of this text from Spanish into English.

Notes

1 See Stoffle, W.R. *et al.* 1991.

2 In using the term 'economism' our intention is not to point out the fact that the economy pertains to this framework, which is obvious, but rather the abusive presence in this context of economy and technics. In any case, we would underline the clear absence of research and social policy and also, among other things, of ecology.

3 These are cultural spaces in which individuals weave their social relations and around them create a sentiment of identity. The household is an institution which is deeply rooted in Aragonese law and custom. Its survival is guaranteed by means of indivisible inheritance. This is why we write household *(Casa)* with a capital letter, to distinguish it from the common understanding of *casa* as a building (house). *Comarca* refers to a small subdivision of the region. In this case there is a specific term for 'territory' and it is *La Montana* which is something like 'the Highlands' in English. It has a counterpoint in *La Tierra Plana* or *La Ribera,* that is 'the Lowlands' or 'the Plains'.

4 The village of Campo, then with a population of 500, had to be expropriated and would have been flooded according to the Lorenzo Pardo project.

5 The use of 'games' and 'vernacular' among the signs of local identity refers specifically to a kind of traditional Aragonese bowling played in Campo, and to 'Ribagorzano', a local variety of the Aragonese language.

6 The term 'argumentative detour' does not directly translate from the Spanish, *'rodeo argumental',* but implies the adoption of 'methodical reasoning' (rather than a fondness of arguing) as a detour from the people's culturalism. It also relates closely to Fischer and Forester's *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (1993), which attempts to incorporate Habermas's call for a rationality of communication to counterbalance the invasion of 'lifeworlds' by instrumental–technical reasoning.

7 This problem has also been analysed in other circumstances: we studied the expropriation process which took place in connection with the construction of a dam called Mediano. The administration used the *Ley de Expropiación Forzosa* (Bill of Forced Expropriation) which, following liberal tradition, which is preferably directed towards property, considers the individual or the institution as the objects of expropriation. In so doing, it ignores the community or the ties which link individuals and families and which are real for those socially involved. When expropriation takes place, property is destroyed and compensation offered for such destruction. However, communities, social links, territory, identity and culture are also destroyed. This is never compensated because the damage is never estimated.

8 The Ebro Basin Water Authority has not yet accepted a representation from the villages affected by the hydraulic projects of the *Consejo del Agua* (Water Council). It is being considered alongside other representations from groups such as irrigators, hydroelectricity producers and ecologist movements.

9 We now use a more general term such as 'highlanders' because this situation has spread to all the valleys in the Aragonese Pyrenees. Recently all local councils belonging to this territory came together to form a new association to defend their interests, called *Mesa de Boltaña*.

10 What we say is that both conceptions are cultural. The difference lies in their reconfiguration. Culturalism means a reconstruction from within, reinforcing what is estimated 'ours'. So its basic mechanism is a reinvention of identity using the collective memory. Usually the result of this reinvention is a revival of traditionalism and sometimes a certain conservatism. Economism recreates culture from outside and in this case by using the basic principles of development economy in the context of capitalism, technology and democracy. It is true, on the other hand, that this interpretation of democracy is too formal and strict, and tends to ignore minorities. The concept of economic development is too quantitative and lacks a certain criticism of technique and at the same time tends to reject the constraints of ecology.

11 After the right wing triumph in the last Spanish parliamentary elections (1996) and with a new government in power, this essential bill has been blocked as the *Partido Popular* (PP) wants to introduce some relevant changes.

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Chapter 6

Contested space

Planners, tourists, developers and environmentalists in Malta

Jeremy Boissevain and Nadia Theuma

> Almost all of the most significant environmental issues, global or domestic, were crystallized first not by governments responding to or using 'science', but by poorly resourced NGOs and sundry individual environmentalists.
>
> Robin Grove-White (1993:20)

Tourism has been a major factor in Malta's economic development since it gained independence in 1964. Not surprisingly, the rapid development has created conflicts. Environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have increasingly resisted the commodification of their limited space. In 1992, responding to public dissatisfaction with the lack of adequate planning, the Maltese government finally implemented a structure plan and an authority to control building development. By means of an extended case study of conflict between government, NGOs and developers, we explore the progress of a tourism-related development project. After examining both discourse and action, we conclude that, in Malta, the outcomes of confrontations over actual development projects are not so much determined by rules and arguments as by tactics.

We make no apology for our detailed case material; descriptions of comparable confrontations are scarce (but see Milton 1993, particularly Pearce 1993). Such encounters will increase as host communities become aware of the environmental consequences of tourist developments.

Tourism in Malta

With a land area of 120 square miles (316 km^2) and a population of 378,000, the Maltese islands make up the most densely populated country in Europe.

Since tourism began in the 1960s, the volume of arrivals has grown steadily (see Table 6.1). In 1996 just oveà one million people visited this mini-state. Almost half were British, though the proportion from the European continent has been steadily increasing.

Until the mid–1980s, most Maltese unreservedly welcomed tourists. They accepted that maximising tourist arrivals and the resulting overcrowding, discomfort, rampant building and environmental destruction was necessary for economic development. In the 1990s, as tourist arrivals topped one million annually, the Maltese began to feel oppressed by the effects of this laissez-faire pressure on the social and physical environment. The lack of a strategic plan and widespread abuse of what building regulations there were (administered by the Planning Area Permits Board (PAPB)) resulted in disorderly, unsightly and often jerry-built construction. The growth of seaside communities exploded. The public bus system had difficulty coping during the high season. Maltese commuters and holiday-makers were left waiting in the sun while the ancient buses packed with tourists lumbered past without stopping.

Table 6.1: Growth of tourist arrivals in the Maltese Islands, 1960–96

Year	*Holiday-Makers*	*Cruise Passengers*	*Total*
1960	19,689	8,676	28,365
1965	47,804	16,937	64,747
1970	170,853	64,998	235,851
1975	335,519	49,219	384,738
1980	728,700	60,200	788,900
1985	517,900	43,700	561,600
1990	871,776	56,624	928,400
1993	1,063,213	67,474	1,130,687
1994	1,090,548	85,675	1,176,223
1995	1,039,293	76,679	1,115,972
1996	984,548	69,240	1,053,788

Sources: Malta National Tourist Organization Annual Reports

Bus drivers were overworked, often bad tempered, aggressive and rude. Prices in seaside shops soared. The result was seaside gridlock and frayed tempers.

Record tourist arrivals also provoked discontent in some areas away from the sea. In 1994 the residents of the medieval walled town of Mdina became increasingly uncomfortable with the mass tourist presence. Perched on a hill far removed from the sea, Mdina is one of the island's foremost tourist attractions. This walled town, with a resident population of only 300, is visited by three out of four tourists,[1] as well as tens of thousands of Maltese. This meant that in 1994 roughly a million persons spent at least an hour strolling about there. Constant exposure to crowds of tourists created hostility (Boissevain and Sammut 1994; Boissevain 1996b). Local residents were being asked to sacrifice privacy and tranquillity for the national good without compensation. They complained that tourists peered into their houses and sometimes even entered uninvited; that they left a mess behind; that they blocked the narrow roads; that they dressed indecently in seaside attire; and that encroaching commercial interests were changing their town.

Mdina residents were not alone in reacting to 1994's record tourist crowds. Malta's leading columnist vented her annoyance in a way that would have been unthinkable a few years before. Her outburst reflected the opinion of many:

> After six months of blazing hot weather, there comes a point where a tourist complains and I explode…. It seems not to occur to people like this that perhaps the Maltese have had it with never having their small islands to themselves, that they can no longer tolerate sharing their precious few resources with hordes of complaining invaders. Tourism, once regarded as our salvation and still our main means of sustenance, has become purely a necessary evil. Because Malta is so tiny, there is nowhere one can go to get away from these increasingly appalling, invasive, all-pervasive people…. The pressure on resources is enormous…. Perhaps the time has come to admit that the quality of life of Maltese people is sinking amid tourist arrival figures topping the one million mark…something has to be done.
>
> (Caruana Galizia 1994)

By 1994, however, the government was already trying to reduce its dependence on mass tourism. It began to diversify its markets and sought higher spending visitors rather than merely increasing numbers. In line with this policy, the government promoted the development of four and five star hotels and froze further expansion of other accommodation.

Unfortunately, quality tourism's infrastructural requirements include luxury hotels, golf courses and marinas. These consume more natural resources than mass sun, sand and sea tourism for which the infrastructure was already in place. Recent public protest about threats to Malta's environment have *all* concerned new projects aimed at attracting up-market tourists. Before dealing with one of these, however, it is necessary to take a brief look at Malta's planning procedure and its environmental lobby.

Planning authority and structure plan

Since the middle of the 1980s, there has been growing public concern about the unbridled building development. Maltese politicians had long talked about bringing some order to the existing planning chaos, but the powerful construction industry was well served by the existing laissez-faire situation. The new Nationalist government, elected in 1987, eager to join the European Union, moved to bring the country's laws more in line with North European norms. By 1992 it had introduced an environment protection act, a development planning act and had established a planning authority (PA) and a structure plan. The laws and the PA were in part patterned on British regulations and procedures as well as on Council of Europe and European Union guidelines. Because of the country's small scale and dense population, many conditions were formulated more strictly than elsewhere in Europe.

The Environment Protection Act (1991) obliged the Government to take all preventive and remedial measures necessary for the protection of the environment. Its provisions included monitoring and information, control of toxic substances, control of noise and energy, disposal of waste, protection of flora and fauna and historical heritage. The Development Planning Act (1992) made provisions for the establishment of a Planning Authority with powers to promote and control land development and building, both public and private, in accordance with approved policies and procedures for implementation contained in the Structure Plan (1990). Of particular interest for our discussion is that the plan designated a series of Urban Conservation Areas, within which building would be strictly controlled, and a series of Rural Conservation Areas with agricultural, ecological, archaeological and landscape interests, within which no further construction was allowed.

Under the terms of the 1990 plan, all external building work must be approved by the Planning Authority. All applications for such permission are scrutinised by the Authority's staff of specialists. Major applications and those requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment are decided by the full Planning Authority (PA). Minor applications are delegated to the Directorate's officers. Applications which fall between these two extremes are decided by the Development Control Commission. The case discussed below concerns a major application that consequently was decided by the full Planning Authority board.

The members of the PA are appointed by the president following the recommendations of the Prime Minister. The PA Board consists of fifteen members: eight independent members, including the chairman; a representative of each of the two parties in parliament; and five civil servants.[2] Meetings regarding applications and appeals are open to the public. Those wishing to make interventions must arrange this with the PA's secretary beforehand.

Applications for major projects are decided on in two steps: an Outline Application and, later, a Full Application. The Outline Application is vetted by the PA's technical staff and an Environmental Impact Assessment is required (commissioned by the developer). A site notice is then posted and the application advertised in the press to elicit public reaction. Consultations with government departments are then carried out and the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is examined by the PA and the Environment Protection Department (EPD). The latter then presents the draft EIS to a public meeting for comment. The developer revises the application and EIS in the light of the comments and resubmits them to the PA. Copies of the revised EIS and the outline development application are circulated for comment to government departments and agencies, NGOs, and may be inspected by the public. The PA then decides whether or not to approve the Outline Application. Once that is approved, the developer, assured that the project will now go ahead, must prepare the Full Application and submit that to the PA for final approval.[3]

Thus, in response to the pressure of civil society to bring order to the chaotic building situation and safeguard the environment, the government could no longer disregard environmental concerns in favour of commercial interests as it generally had done in the past. Henceforth, development would have to take place within the framework of the Structure Plan. Though not discussed as an abstract concept, 'development' had now acquired a more complex meaning than it had for most of the thirty years since independence. It now meant more than just the creation of jobs and wealth. Heritage, environment and quality of life had become an official part of the development concept.

The environmental lobby

Organised concern for the environment developed slowly. Throughout the late 1970s, environmentalists were concerned mainly with protecting monuments, flora, fauna and the countryside. They prepared briefs, restored some monuments, wrote numerous letters to the editors of local newspapers and organised clean-up efforts. They rarely held public demonstrations, although in the late 1960s, Din 1-Art Helwa (Malta's National Trust, literally, 'This Lovely Land') had successfully campaigned to reduce the height of a luxury hotel being constructed against Valletta's bastions. By the mid 1980s, however, the lobby's targets and tactics began to change.

One of the first public demonstrations by Maltese environmentalists was organised by several NGOs on 5 June 1984, UN World Environment Day. Then, as now, the NGOs were divided over the desirability of public demonstrations, especially since the Labour government (1971–87) had turned a blind eye to attacks on its critics.[4] Nonetheless, young activists from Moviment ghall-Ambjent (Movement for the Environment), Din l-Art Helwa and the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature (SSCN) marched in Valletta. They carried banners with green painted messages calling for the protection of the environment: 'Hand in hand for a better environment' and 'A neglected country—a divided people' (*The Times,* 6 June 1984). The demo passed without incident, in part because it was not specifically directed *against* policies of the Labour government, but also because Labour spectators mistook the green banners as support for Libya, at the time a political ally of the government.

Encouraged by the success of the 1984 demo, the newly formed Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent (Youths for the Environment) organised a demonstration in November 1985. This demo did have a clear target: the rampant development of beach concessions and uncontrolled building activity. This time the demonstrators were severely mauled. While police looked on, Labour activists, mobilised by a constituency aide of the Minister of Public Works, ripped up banners and beat up several demonstrators. Those injured included a woman who was whipped with a bicycle chain. This unexpected attack received wide press coverage. It served to put the Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent 'on the map', according to one demonstrator. It was even condemned by the Labour Prime Minister, who ordered the police to investigate the matter. The attack and ensuing publicity created a sense of solidarity and determination among those who had demonstrated.[5] During 1986 and 1987 there were other campaigns. Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent successfully campaigned against an illegally built tarmac plant. It also sought to stem the massive allocation of government building plots before the 1987 election.[6]

The environment was beginning to become a public issue, albeit a minor one, figuring in the run up to the 1987 election. In January 1987, the Socialist[7] Youths organised a conference on the environment. The Labour Prime Minister called on participants to help change the country's mentality and to conserve the country's environmental heritage.[8] The opposition Nationalist Party electoral manifesto attacked the Labour government's disregard of the environment and promised remedial action.

The following Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent campaign targeted plans of the new Nationalist government (elected to office in May 1987) to erect a second power station. The site chosen was a scenic peninsula overlooking the picturesque harbour of Marsaxlokk. Furthermore, the chosen site was quite literally on the doorstep of former Labour Prime Minister Dom Mintoff's country hideaway. In spite of NGO efforts to keep the issue out of politics, it became a contest between the two parties. Notwithstanding the environmentalists' detailed scientific briefs, camp-ins, and the pinpointing of viable alternative sites, the power station was built as planned, but the campaign had shown the public that environmentalists were prepared to oppose major government projects. They were becoming a well coordinated political pressure group.

In 1989, many leading activists of Moviment ghall-Ambjent (by then no longer a 'youth' group) joined with others to found Alternattiva Demokratika (Democratic Alternative, AD). Affiliated to the Federation of European Green Parties, AD was openly political. Through letters and announcements, demonstrations, a bi-weekly newspaper, public meetings in Valletta and a radio station, it debated national issues. Its targets included major up-scale tourist projects.

AD unsuccessfully contested the 1992 and 1996 national elections,[9] but did better in the 1994 local council elections, when eight of its candidates were elected. Following the unexpected victory of Labour in 1996, the binary nature of Malta's winner-takes-all factional politics strongly reasserted itself. In the 1997 local council elections, no AD councillors were elected. Nonetheless, with the establishment of Alternattiva Demokratika, Maltese environmentalists acquired an important political resource. AD's status as an active political party ensured that the environmental issues it challenged received local media coverage. Through its linkage to the Federation of European Green Parties, Maltese environmental issues were assured of a wider European audience, not an unimportant factor given the Nationalist government's fervent interest in negotiating EU membership for Malta. In 1996, however, the new Labour government placed Malta's EU membership application in 'cold storage'.

To summarise, in the thirty years following independence, environmentalism had become a movement in Malta. There were many active environmental NGOs and a structure plan, a planning authority and a strict planning framework were in place. Both civil society and government had become more sensitive to environmental issues and the governing parties had become a little more tolerant of NGO campaigns and demonstrations.

Having sketched the formal arena, the rules of engagement and the principal competitors, we may now look more closely at a recent conflict fought out between January 1995 and June 1997 over the construction of a massive project involving the Hilton Hotel.

The Hilton

During 1986 and 1987, the Spinola Development Co. Ltd applied to the PAPB for permission to develop the foreshore area and construct an additional story on the Hilton Hotel. The 27-year-old hotel was located in St Julian's, the island's crowded central entertainment district. Situated at the edge of the built-up area, the two-story hotel was separated from the shore by a strip of garigue. This garigue was effectively the area's only remaining open land that had not yet been built on. The development plans were discussed, renegotiated and revised many times during the next nine years. Finally, on 28 March 1995, the formal Outline Application and Environmental Impact Statement were submitted to the Planning Authority. The project had grown to include the construction of a 300–bed, 5–star hotel, a conference centre for 1,000 delegates, a 16–storey business centre with shops and 250 luxury apartments. The project also included the excavation of 800,000 cubic metres of rock to construct a 100-berth yacht marina and the construction of a breakwater. The development would cost 45 million Maltese Liri (US$122 million/DM186.7 million) and was to be completed within five years.

The PA set in motion the evaluation process described above. The Environment Protection Department (EPD) announced that the public hearing on the application and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be held on 24 May. Copies of the EIS were made available shortly before the hearing at the offices of the PA and the St Julian's Local Council. They were not sent to the NGOs.

The EPD hearing was held at the Hilton Hotel, at the cost of the developers. It was attended by a large crowd of interested NGOs and residents. The developers spoke first and presented details of the project, noting that it would benefit Malta economically and create 300 jobs during the construction period and 300 new permanent jobs when the hotel was operational. The NGOs questioned it critically. It was a rowdy meeting. Interested parties were then given until 8 June to send written submissions to the Environment Protection Department. The EPD would then evaluate, summarise and send the submissions to the PA, where they were to be considered in connection with the Outline Application and EIS. Participants were told that the PA meeting to vote on the Outline Application would be announced in due course. Strangely, there was no press present at this meeting.

The NGOs were taken by surprise when the PA announced that the vote on the Outline Application would take place within two weeks, on 8 June. This was also the deadline for public submissions to the EPD. A representative of a group of local residents later told us that:

> There was no way that the EPD could have digested all the reports we sent. Mine, for example, only reached them 48 hours before the hearing. They must have simply bundled the reports and sent them to the PA. The whole process was too rapid to be serious.

The meeting on 8 June was held at the PA offices. It was organised around the written submissions to the EPD. The room was crowded with NGO members. There seemed to be room for everyone and no one was turned away. It was also extremely rowdy.

The Director of Planning spoke first and presented a favourable case for the development. He noted that the project was in line with Structure Plan policy to develop luxury tourist accommodation; the Environmental

Impact Statement was generally favourable; he set out the stipulations the developer would have to conform to; and he observed that it would be unfair to expect the developers to undertake the expensive studies stipulated unless the project was accepted in principle. Those who had made written submission then made short presentations. These included representatives of Din l-Art Helwa, SSCN and various groups of local residents. The floor was then open.

The NGOs were unanimous in condemning the proposed development. They argued that the hearings had been poorly advertised; that a section of a listed monument, an entrenchment (fortification) built by the Knights of Malta in 1770, would be destroyed; that the pollution caused by excavating the marina and its subsequent effluent would damage not only nearby seagrass *(Posidonia oceanea)* meadows but also pollute several of Malta's most popular swimming beaches; that the EIS had not examined the project's socio-economic consequences; that the public would be denied access to areas of the foreshore; that the project's excavation, blasting and building would subject residents in this densely populated neighbourhood to five years of extreme inconvenience; and that the PA had ignored their submissions.

Towards the end of the meeting, members of a new radical NGO, called Graffiti, stood up and displayed posters calling the developers barons and capitalists. When security guards seized these, they immediately replaced them with another set. At this point they were all forced to leave.

After a short discussion, the attending PA Board members voted twelve to one in favour of the Outline Application. This is how one newspaper described the outcome:

> At the end it was all shouting and shoving. The Planning Authority's conference room became a sea of swaying bodies while the two Group 4 [security] personnel unsuccessfully tried to marshal the protesters out of the door.
>
> The shouting then went on outside: Mafia, Fascists, Malta for the Maltese and not for the tourists, you have ruined Malta for ever, and the one at which Labour deputy leader—Dr. George Vella—blanched: We do not have an Opposition any more.
>
> (*Malta Independent,* 11 June 1995)

The outcome of the meeting was that the project was approved in principle and the developers were free to begin work on the detailed Full Application.

Two weeks later, twelve environmental organisations protested against the proposed development. They marched into the area to be developed and sent a letter to the executive director of Hilton International, London. In it they appealed to him, in particular, not to construct the marina. They summarised their arguments, noted that the PA had ignored these and stated that there had been inadequate public discussion owing to the over hasty procedure adopted. They pleaded for the decision to 'be reconsidered on social and environmental grounds'.

Both the Planning Authority meeting to approve the Outline Application and the subsequent protest demonstration were widely reported in the English language press. The Maltese language daily papers, respectively linked to the (then) governing Nationalist Party and the (then) opposition Labour Party, were largely silent. Their party's representatives on the Planning Authority had approved the application.

A year later, the hearing on the Full Application was held. The application was filed with the PA on 19 April 1996. The public hearing and final vote on the application were held on 23 May 1996. The application was approved after a four-hour discussion. The discussion was a replica of the hearings the previous year, but this time admission was tightly controlled and limited. There was now a list of persons to be admitted and police searched those who entered, but the NGOs and the public were not advised of this tighter procedure beforehand.

Employees of the developer arrived hours before the meeting and were thus able to occupy virtually all the limited number of seats reserved for the public. For the most part they were weather-beaten, roughly-dressed workmen. Only NGO members intending to speak had notified the PA secretary and so appeared on the list. Others, arriving later and unaware of the stricter admittance rules, were not on the list, and were not admitted. Most of the Moviment ghall-Ambjent members and the entire Graffiti delegation were consequently left standing at the entrance. One of the NGO speakers, noting that there were still three unoccupied chairs at the back of the room, tried to gain admittance for three of those waiting outside. This was refused because they were 'not on the list'. He commented on this anomalous situation to the developer's principal consultant, who replied: 'Last time you caught us on the wrong foot. This time we were prepared.'

The Director of Planning again opened the meeting. He again outlined the reasons the PA Directorate supported the project: it conformed to government policy to develop luxury tourist accommo dation; the

Environmental Impact Statement was favourable; and the developer had met the technical stipulations imposed during the discussions on the outline plan the previous June (which included provisions to dispose of rubble and excavated cuttings and protect the surroundings from dust and disturbance, measures to control pollution from the marina, the handling of resident's complaints, and so on).

The developers and the NGOs repeated most of the arguments used the previous year at the hearings on the EIS and the Outline Application. The Friends of the Earth spokesperson, a lawyer, noted a new point: that there was an appeal pending, thus no decision could be taken before its outcome.

After all parties had spoken, the Director of Planning replied to queries and objections: there would be daytime access to the foreshore, the site would be landscaped which would be good for residents, blasting would be controlled, the EIS was well done, the Lands Department had done its work well. Regarding the appeal, he maintained that it was all right to proceed pending its outcome because third party appeals in the past had all been turned down by the appeal board.

The Friends of the Earth spokesperson rose and protested that the Director had not given correct information on the pending appeal. The chairman first ruled him out of order but later allowed him to speak. His point was that the court had not yet ruled on the constitutionality of an appeal by a third party against the ruling of the PA. Hence, he argued, it was not possible to proceed with the project. At this point, the developer, a rough, imposing bulk of a man, roared his disapproval. He lurched at the lawyer and began grossly to insult him and his family. Security guards separated the parties and quieted the developer's noisy supporters, some of whom had begun to move threateningly towards the lawyer. Order was restored.

After ten minutes of lackadaisical questions by board members, during which the developer was obliged, finally, to grant 24-hour access to the foreshore, the project was put to the vote. As expected, of those present, thirteen board members voted in favour and one against. The sole dissenter, the university Professor of Classics and Archaeology, again opposed the development, among other reasons on aesthetic grounds: the planned eight-story apartment blocks reminded him of a collection of airport hangers.

After the vote most of the public stormed out as a number of the developer's employees surged forward to congratulate him, patting his shoulder in a show of solidarity. Work on the redevelopment of the hotel began almost immediately, but the public was far from satisfied. The Planning Authority's decision provoked a spate of letters to the English language papers. Given the support the two parties' representatives had given the application, not surprisingly the party (Maltese language) papers again gave little coverage.

Alternattiva, Demokratika (31 May 1996) brought forward two additional points. It demanded to know on what grounds the Authority had approved the project notwithstanding the extremely negative evaluation prepared by its own Environmental Management Unit (EMU). It called for this confidential report to be made public.[10] It also maintained that the lifting by the Lands Department of the conditions imposed on the original lease of public land to the Spinola Development Company, which had strictly limited its use to purely touristic purposes, was illegal. The developer had, without parliamentary approval or tendering, acquired a prime site of public land for a mere LM191,640 on which it was now free to build and sell 250 luxury apartments that would earn it millions.

On 23 June, the *Malta Independent,* which had acquired a leaked copy of the suppressed EMU report, published a detailed account of its criticism of the project. The rest of the summer, opponents of the Hilton development stoked the local press with critical letters and lobbied foreign contacts to publicise the affair. Then, on 10 October, the newly formed Front Kontra l-Hilton (FKH), composed chiefly of Graffiti members and a few from Moviment ghall-Ambjent, introduced a new tactic. Using the slogan 'Where diplomacy fails, direct non-violent action prevails', five members chained themselves to a bulldozer and a truck at the construction site. The police released them without arresting them. Two days later four more FKH protesters chained themselves to a barge transporting excavated rock from the marina site. A tragedy was narrowly averted when impatient workers set two protesters adrift chained to a sinking tyre. Public reaction was generally favourable to the Front's daring and, for Malta, innovative action. The object of the action was to stall the development, to draw attention to the fact that the PA's own Environmental Management Unit had disapproved of the project.

The following week the Front, Alternattiva Demokratika and Moviment ghall-Ambjent organised a protest meeting. It was addressed by a Green Euro MP who promised to place the destruction of Malta's environment and heritage by the Hilton developers before the European Parliament. A Graffiti spokesman then called for an inquiry on the 'suspicious way' land was transferred to the Hilton developer. He mentioned that a Front member had received threatening telephone calls after he had chained himself to the bulldozer. Graffiti launched a home page on the Internet about the Hilton development.

Following the Labour electoral victory at the end of October, the Front met with the new Environment Minister. He was also Deputy Prime Minister and had been the Labour representative on the Planning Authority. He indicated his government was ready to open an inquiry into the transfer of government land 'If enough public pressure were placed on him' *(Jekk issirlu pressjjoni pubblika)*. He told them to address their request to the Attorney General.

The Front's meeting with the Attorney General was discouraging. He spoke of formal channels and said there were probably no grounds for an inquiry. AD accused the minister of brushing off *(jfarfar)* the Party's pre-election promise to hold an inquiry. It also noted, 'It is a well known fact that the Easysell company [the developer's parent company], which is promoting the project, is very close to the MLP [Maltese Labour Party]' (*Alternattiva Demokratika,* 29 November 1996). However, at this stage, the protesters adopted new, more dramatic tactics.

On Monday, 6 January 1997, three members of the Front went on hunger strike in front of the Prime Minister's office building. Their object was to force government to launch an inquiry into the project. They were particularly concerned about the transfer of public land to the developers without a call for tenders or a parliamentary resolution. The Prime Minister visited them the same evening. He promised to let them see the PA Hilton files if they ended their strike. While acknowledging the positive nature of his offer, the Front refused to end the strike until there was the firm promise of an independent inquiry. In the meantime, mediators went to work. Three days later, the strikers wrote to the Ombudsman requesting him to investigate the Hilton case. Then, on the morning of the sixth day of the strike, a hostile crowd of ex-Hilton employees and some of the developer's employees surrounded the strikers. They mocked them, threw bananas into their tent and taunted them with ham rolls. They shouted insults, called them thieves and accused them of ignoring the needs of Hilton workers: 'Die if you want to, but the Hilton will be built'; 'Hilton mean jobs *[sic]*'; 'Either you starve or we starve' (*The Sunday Times,* 12 January 1997). During this encounter, which lasted about thirty minutes, the police, with tact and patience, protected the strikers. This was in marked contrast to police behaviour towards environmentalist demonstrations under the previous Labour government.

Later that morning the strikers met the Ombudsman. He told them that he could not accept their request because, as a third party, they did not have a personal interest in the case. Nonetheless, because the matter was of national interest, he agreed to an investigation on his own initiative. The strikers had achieved their goal. They announced the Ombudsman's decision and stopped their strike. They emphasised that they were not against the rebuilding of the Hilton, but were opposed to the marina, the commercial apartment blocks and the dubious nature of the land transfer.

Throughout the strike there was widespread, generally sympathetic press coverage. Each day the support from various groups and organisations grew. Streams of visitors, including many MPs and Nationalist officials (by then in opposition), called on them, mostly after dark. There were several petitions. Not everyone agreed with all aspects of their cause, but they generally respected their courage and commitment: they had risked their lives for their principles. They had become public heroes. In the process they had sharply focused public attention on the country's environmental heritage.

On 7 February the Ombudsman presented his report to parliament. His findings showed that the Ministry of the Environment had been extremely careless in approving the developers' requests to lift the conditions attached to the use and transfer of land. Moreover it had grossly undervalued it. By failing to use its negotiating power, it had deprived the country of many hundred thousand liri of revenue.[11] His overall conclusion was that while the substantial changes to the original grant conditions were not illegal, they clearly *'constitute a case of bad administration without due consideration to the national interest'* (Ombudsman 1997:13, his emphasis).[12] He recommended changes in the legislation to safeguard the national interest. Thus, the complaints of the NGOs had been largely vindicated.

Front members next set about examining the relevant files the Prime Minster had promised. On 23 March they presented their findings (Front 1997a). The Planning Authority rebutted these (PA 1997) and the Front replied to the PA (Front 1997b). The Front argued that its findings supported the points it had defended during the past two years, namely: that the project went against Structure Plan policies (see note 10v): that the EIS was not correctly conducted, particularly in failing to assess social and economic consequences; that expert opinions were ignored without argument; that there were many extraordinary and suspicious circumstances; that the decision was rushed, precluding a proper study of all its consequences; that the developer provided no evidence to support his claim of the project's economic benefits. The Planning Authority, in turn, accused the Front of making unsubstantiated statements and slanted, simplistic assessments. The developers stated to the press that 'The Hilton project was approved in a most transparent and democratic manner and the obstructions are now coming from a handful of fundamentalists who seek to impose their personal views on all the rest in the most undemocratic manner' (*The Sunday Times,* 30 March 1997).

Particularly piquant in the Front's analysis (Front 1997a) was the degree of cooperation, even intimacy, between the PA experts and the developer. This was, perhaps, not surprising since they had been working together on the project for years, but still it was instructive to read that: the Director of Planning had asked his staff to check the draft text of a letter to be sent by the developer's architect to the PA on the Outline Application (ibid.: 7f.); the developer's legal advisor was also the legal advisor of the Planning Authority (ibid.: 6) (although the PA maintained it had not consulted him on the Hilton project (Planning Authority 1997:32)); the Director of Planning persuaded the Director of Museums to overrule a previous Museum Department's 'strong objection' to breaching the entrenchment, so that the marina could be built (Front 1997a: 8). Also, the developer had added a personal note to a fax (on 22 January 1996, well after the approval of the Outline Application) sent to the PA case officer handling the project (who at the time was Chairman of the Fund Raising Committee of the Malta Hospice Movement):

> Dear Chris, I gladly *[sic]* enclose a donation of LM 2,000 for the Hospice movement which is so close to your heart. George
>
> (ibid.: 7–8)

The NGOs fought a long hard battle against the Hilton project. In the course of their campaign, they highlighted, as never before, the way powerful developers and the PA operate. They demonstrated to the public that much can be achieved by determined and imaginative non-violent action. Finally, they signalled to both Planning Authority and future developers that their actions would be closely monitored and that public attention would be directed at perceived irregularities.

Discussion

The most striking aspect of the entire Hilton procedure was succinctly formulated by Din l-Art Helwa: ‘This project was rushed through with unseemly haste’ (‘Resolutions of the Din l-Art Helwa Council’, 14 June 1995). In fact, there were just three weeks between public access to details of the project and the final vote on the Outline Application. This was patently too short for an informed public discussion. The Planning Directorate’s disregard of the well documented points raised by the many NGOs and residents’ committees, and its ‘unseemly haste’ gave the appearance of a hidden agenda to ensure that the Hilton project was approved.

Clearly, both Nationalist and Labour interests favoured the project. Informants suggested that there must have been collusion between the two parties: their representatives on the PA had twice voted for the project. Although there is no actual evidence, Alternattiva, Moviment ghall-Ambjent and Graffiti suggested there were other factors influencing a decision in favour of the Hilton project. In particular, they stressed the personal ties between leading politicians and administrators. In a country as small as Malta, ties linking people to each other are frequent and unavoidable. We have already noted that the legal consultant of the Planning Authority was also the legal advisor to the Hilton developer. Other ties were cited by the opponents of the project: the sister of the Nationalist Minister of Finance (at the time of the Hilton decisions) was married to the developer’s brother; two daughters of the shadow Labour Finance Minister worked for the developer’s company; the developer and both ministers came from the same rural town (Qormi); the developer’s architect looked after clients of the former Minister of Public Works when the latter was appointed to the cabinet (he later became Minister of Education); the developer’s chief consultant was also financial advisor to the Labour Party. After Labour’s 1996 electoral victory he was appointed chairman of the government controlled Mid-Med Bank. Alternattiva, Moviment ghall-Ambjent and Graffiti believe that these personal links must have influenced the decision that favoured the Hilton project. They have accused the Labour and Nationalist parties of collusion.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions may be drawn from our study that are relevant for those interested in aspects of planning, development and the environment. First, it demonstrates that adopting detailed planning regulations and establishing a sound administrating authority does not guarantee protection to the environment. We have seen that while operating within the legal framework, lease conditions may be altered to benefit developers; government departments persuaded to approve destruction of national monuments; critical expert opinion suppressed; and public hearings manipulated. Public hearings of planning boards have been aptly described as a 'theatre of control' (Pearce 1993:202), and we would argue that the Hilton hearings were rituals staged (in the event, unsuccessfully) to persuade the public that decisions were made after taking on board the advice of experts and interested parties and conformed to the scientific and social criteria of the Structure Plan.

Second, the case also illustrates that while conservation of environment and heritage since 1992 have officially become a central aspect of government development policy, many in government merely pay lip service to it. For them, as for developers, development is still viewed purely in economic terms, and thus the ends—profit, employment, more up-scale tourists and project completion within the term of the current government—justify the means—the destruction of the national patrimony of land and historical monuments.

Third, the engagement of the NGOs in the Hilton conflict has helped to crystallise a national environmental perspective, in addition to exposing anomalous practices of planners and developers. The NGOs must be credited with bringing about a greater public appreciation of the environment and the threats to it.[13] The environment has been recognised as an aspect of the country's heritage.[14] The NGOs have contributed to a new awareness of surroundings previously taken for granted and subordinated to the requirements of economic development. One of the country's leading environmentalists described the changing environmental perception as follows:

> In the past (up to the beginning of the 1980s) we could not say to a developer that by building he is going to damage the habitat of a particular snail, so we had to come up with more feasible reasons, aesthetic, for instance. Today if we say that the Posidonia meadow is going to be destroyed, authorities think twice before carrying out a particular project (though not always). Public interest in the environment also increased due to global and European influences, such as media reports and documentaries. The fact is that the image of the environmentalist has changed. In the 1960s and 1970s we were a group of

> 'harmless lunatics', but today people take us seriously. We have science degrees, our members are degree students and we have adopted a professional aspect. This does not mean that our membership is solely from the academic pool. We have a large membership from the Dockyard, who are quite active.

Nonetheless, NGOs are still marginalised. While they give voice to civil society, they are dismissed as third parties, which since members are not personally affected, have no right to appeal planning decisions (see also Mairal Buil and Bergua, this volume). Most NGOs are also concerned with social and cultural values. Planners, bureaucrats and developers dismiss these as emotional and subjective, thus unscientific, concerns and therefore ignore them. More scientifically oriented NGOs, such as the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature, are tarred with the same brush and their scientifically grounded protests are also ignored (see also Grove-White 1993:20; Mairal Buil and Bergua, this volume).

Excluded from the official development discourse, some NGOs have turned to more physical means of communication. This strategy can be extremely effective. The action of the Front Kontra il-Hilton generated the Ombudsman's report and opened confidential Planning Authority files. These firmly introduced the important issue of administrative probity into the Maltese development discourse.[15] The gap between expectations aroused by the much vaunted new planning procedure and what actually happened during the Hilton process demonstrates the conflicting concepts of development operating in Malta. This, in turn, highlights the cleavage in Malta between a state, dominated by factional politicians whose re-election depends to some extent on the favours they can grant, and a civil society increasingly aware of the gap between promise, expectation and practice.[16]

The heightened confrontation between the NGOs and tourist developers both followed from and stimulated deeper thinking about the impact of tourism. Space for leisure pursuits has been declining for many years, a decline linked to the increase in tourism. Initially reactions took the form of physical aversion to tourists: rude bus drivers, sloppy service, aggressive reaction to tourist complaints, objections to tourist behaviour (Boissevain 1996b). Recently it has become more intense. People are experiencing what amounts to a sense of loss. Their leisure space is being taken away, again, as it was under the British colonial establishment which withdrew large areas of choice country-side from the public. The conflict we examined was provoked by a massive project targeting the luxury tourism trade, as a direct consequence of recent government policy. Since there are more luxury projects on the way, further conflict is imminent.[17] There is growing awareness that the country's physical and cultural resources are being needlessly squandered by massive speculative developments.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped us with this article. Our thanks in particular go to Saviour Balzan, Natalino Bonello, Anthony Bonnano, Michael Briguglio, Arnold Cassola, George Cilia, Tony Ellul, Dominic Fenech, Carmel Fsadni, Edward Mallia, Julian Manduca, Rudolf Ragonesi, Leslie Vella and our editors, Simone Abram and Jacqueline Waldren, for their suggestions and help.

Notes

1 This is an estimate based on the 1992 Secretariat of Tourism survey of 1,144 tourists in various parts of Malta of whom 72.8 per cent had visited Mdina.

2 In 1995 the eight independent members consisted of one architect, a businessman, four university lecturers (an architect, a chemist, an accountant and an archaeologist), a teacher, and an accountant. The five government members represented the Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Environment Protection, Treasury, and Social Policy.

3 Details of the procedure for submission of applications and environmental impact assessments are based on discussions with PA officers and on Planning Authority brochures (Planning Authority 1994, n.d.).

4 For example, in November 1977 Labour supporters physically and verbally attacked lecturers, students and guests at a university graduation ceremony. In October 1979 they wrecked and then burnt the premises of *The Times* (of Malta) and vandalised the private residence of the Leader of the Opposition. In September 1984 they attacked and damaged the Law Courts in Valletta and sacked the Archbishop's Curia, situated opposite Police Headquarters. The police, present on all these occasions, seemed unable to bring the culprits to book (Boissevain 1993:154).

5 After a change of government and many court appearances later, nine of the attackers were sentenced and fined in March 1991.

6 The campaign questioned the sense of distributing 12,000 new building plots given the fact that 19 per cent of the country's housing stock was unoccupied.

7 The terms Labour and Socialist were used interchangeably, during the 1971–87 Labour government.

8 Generally speaking, Maltese have traditionally regarded empty space outside the home as no-man's land. They deposit domestic rubbish, old refrigerators, soiled mattresses, building rubble, rusty cars and picnic remains alongside roads, in country lanes, off cliffs and in the countryside, in spite of an excellent daily refuse collection service. These habits are beginning to change, but only very slowly.

9 The system of proportional representation with single transferable vote used in Malta for national elections requires a candidate to amass around 3,400 personal votes in order to be elected in one of the 13 five-member constituencies. This threshold was far too high for AD. Although nationally it polled 4,186 votes in 1992 and 3,820 votes in 1996 (respectively 1.7 per cent and 1.5 per cent of the total) none of its candidates were elected. In Malta's patronage dominated, winner-take-all two-party system, voters are reluctant to support a party that is perceived as having no chance of entering parliament and rewarding its supporters.

10 The suppressed Environmental Management Unit Report (1995) on the developers' Environmental Impact Statement was confidential and PA staff were forbidden to discuss it with outsiders. Since it provides important insights into the operation of the Planning Authority we quote from it in detail:

> 1. General Comment
> 1.1 While the EIS is fairly comprehensive, the EMU feels that there is little critical assessment of the project. To the contrary, the EIS seems set to support the development, thus losing credibility.
>
> 2. The Marina
> 2.1 The report mentions that there is clearly a need to provide a more rationalized redevelopment of the site with all bedrooms in the hotel having a pleasant outlook. It is proposed to achieve this by replacing the car park with a yachting marina. This is not an adequate reason to construct a marina with all the negative implications ensuing (mentioned below).
> 2.3 The impact of the marina on these *(Posidonia)* meadows and the species they support will be considerable.
> 2.4 In addition, pollution during the life-time of the marina will increase.
> 2.5 The marina will also have a negative impact on Public Access. It is difficult to accept that 'Public access on most of the marina quayside' be considered a benefit when the existing natural area is being destroyed in favour of an artificial zone. A coastal footpath is effectively being destroyed, contrary to Structure Plan policy….
> 2.6 Bathing areas will be reduced with the construction of the marina.
> 2.8 …[T]he marina involves a breach of the Entrenchment Wall.
>
> 3. Historic Buildings
> 3.2 In addition, the proposal of breaching the entrenchment wall goes counter to the spirit of the Structure Plan…that 'there will be a presumption against the demolition of any building of Architectural or Historical Interest' (Structure Plan 1992:88).

4. Social and Economic Impacts
The EMU believes that the following points are not adequately considered in the EIS.
4.1 The public will be negatively affected by the construction of a marina—both in terms of coastal access as well as with regard to bathing water quality. A coastal footpath will be severed.
4.2 In addition, the negative impacts listed in the EIS, notably visual, air and noise pollution, increased traffic congestion, and others are all social costs, to which there seems to be no adequate compensation by the project.
4.3 The fact that the public will be subjected to five years of construction activities must be seen as a significant social-inconvenience.
4.5 Therefore, it is suggested on the basis of social benefits/disbenefits the project inadequately compensates society for the costs it creates.
4.6 It is also contended that the project will create considerable employment opportunities. This claim is not supported by any research either…. Moreover, the proposed development…is in no stage of the EIS justified in terms of projected demand, or other market indicators. It is simply stated that certain aspects of the development are 'much needed'.
5. Other Comments
5.9 Structure Plan policy…states that 'development will not normally be permitted if it is likely to have a deleterious impact…because of…*visual intrusion*. The sixteen storey centre will cause visual intrusion, especially in the immediate area…as well as across the bay.
5.10 *The tower block* is said to 'serve as a landmark emphasizing the importance of this development…punctuating the otherwise horizontal skyline and unifying this view'. The point made about development enhancing the view is subjective and debatable—the tower block can be said to be visually intrusive to the extent of being an eyesore.

11 In 1995 the Minister of the Environment agreed to lift restrictions on an additional 21,025 square metres for which the developer paid the 1991 rate of Lm121,160, or Lm5.76 per square metre (Ombudsman 1997:5, 11). But 'The rate charged by the Department of Land for the grant of Government land for extensions to existing hotels up to the end of 1995 was Lm28.5 per square metre' (ibid.: 12). The government thus received some Lm478,000 less than it would have had the 1995 rates been applied: 21,025×(28.5–5.76)=Lm478,109.

12 His concluding findings were the following:

(iii) The grant to the Company of concessions to: (a) reclaim a sea area for the construction of a breakwater, and (b) excavate part of the foreshore for the creation of a water basin, should not have been approved as an extension of the original grant in accordance with the motion passed by Parliament on 27 July 1988. In my opinion public accountability and prudence required reference of the concessions to Parliament.

> (iv) The major issue is whether the executive government can allow public land given on long-lease at a non-commercial rent for a specific purpose to be utilized for other purposes. In this case changes to the original conditions regulating the grant of land were so substantial, that in the public interest and in the interest of good administration, the government had a moral obligation to refer the proposed concessions for the scrutiny of Parliament.
>
> (Ombudsman 1997:13)

13 A recent survey showed that Maltese regard the environment as the country's second most serious problem, after drugs (Abela 1996).

14 Other elements that make up the country's heritage include the apostolic origin (St Paul's shipwreck) of its fervent Catholicism, its religious pageantry, its victory over the Turks in 1565, its brave resistance in World War II, its legacy of Neolithic monuments and those built by the Knights of St John, and its unique Semitic language.

15 Kay Milton notes that 'Those who most influence the definition of environmental responsibilities are those who can make the most effective use of the tools of discourse' (1993:9). While she mentions some tools, she strangely ignores physical action, which as we have seen can be a most effective tool of discourse.

16 The new Labour government moved to weaken the Planning Authority's autonomy. On 12 August 1997, without public consultation and with only two weeks' advance notice, it amended the 1992 Development Planning Act to give the cabinet more direct influence over planning developments, restricted the rights of public interest groups to see details of planned developments and curtailed their right to speak at PA meetings (Act 1997).

17 There is increasing public scepticism that the 2,894 existing five-star beds can be kept filled, let alone the 900 beds under construction, and not to mention those of new giant projects being developed on Tignc Point and Manoel Island.

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Chapter 7

The road to ruin

The politics of development in the Balearic Islands

Jacqueline Waldren

> The combination of easy money with the current loss of values, and the fact that we have acquired wealth before acquiring culture, provides a breeding ground for one of the most glaring and harmful features of Spanish society today: corruption, and that climate of general cynicism which makes people think that anyone who does not dip his hand in the coffers is a fool.
>
> Rosa Montero (1995:319)

In 1950, Spain was one of the poorest, least developed countries in Europe. During the following ten years it changed from a predominately rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial nation. Tourism was a new industry and seemed a relatively straightforward means of acquiring large amounts of foreign capital to help the government rebuild the country. The introduction of tourism and the development which followed allowed various areas of the country to 'modernise' more quickly than others. Mallorca was one of the first to develop the infrastructure to accommodate tourism *'de masas'* (large groups). Although mainly rejected by Mallorquin intellectuals—anchored in a vision of rurality—it was promoted by those who saw the economic potential of building hotels and providing services for tourists. Development then meant acquisition of raw materials, energy sources, technology, communications, transport, construction and employment. Projects were directed by appointed leaders who shared Franco's politics and were carried out through patron/client type relationships. With political and ideological repression and depoliticisation, there was little overt opposition to the governments' actions.

The meaning of development has changed since Franco's death in 1975. The nature of Spain's tourism development throws into question the structure and process of democratisation. It reveals the ways decision-making processes at various levels act to exclude or include various social groups through the empowering and disempowering use of discourse. Public reaction to the construction and development of roads during the past decades began to reflect the changing concerns of the populace and has stimulated individuals and groups to speak up after many years of passive acceptance. People are beginning to ask questions concerning the power relationships that affect how resources, including environmental resources, are identified and developed by individuals and groups, and by local, regional and national governments. As awareness of 'the environment' (as a resource to be protected) has been awakened, various interest groups have formed in response to different aspects of development.

The planning and construction of roads in the Balearic Islands has led to major political, economic and social crisis during the past decade and road construction has become a symbol of the changing and varied perception of the environment, of modernity and technology. Focusing on Mallorca, I wish to look at the increasing public concern with and criticisms of the government's idea of development, its misuse of funds and the negative impact on the environment of increasingly complex networks of roads around the island have featured in the newspapers regularly over the past few years. Conflicts over road development have led to the resignation of the president of the Balearic parliament, accusations of corruption and protest marches in various areas of the island. I have compared different newspaper[1] representations of the conflicts surrounding these issues, interviewed government ministers and people from diverse social, economic and political groups living on the island, and participated in local council meetings to try to gain insights into official and popular perceptions of governance since democracy was introduced. Drawing on various accounts of political corruption, planned tourism, territorial planning and road development, I will suggest that, despite increased public interest, the manner in which the government's plans for development are presented to the public continues to reflect the authoritarian past and leaves little room for public participation in decision-making.

In many areas of Mallorca, local political opinions are based more on family associations than on party platforms and many voters continue to support the families that have always been in power. Younger members of politically 'elite' old families have assumed the new roles and agendas. Many people continue to be afraid to contradict or disagree with authority figures. Older men I interviewed during my fieldwork said that 'Under Franco we had no choices and under democracy we have too many choices'. This allows younger politicians to draw on their families' 'traditional' associations and gain the unquestioning support of the older generation. However, discordant voices are beginning to affect planning for development and the way politics and the government are perceived by the public.

The establishment of social democracy (1977) and a new constitution (1978) which divided Spain into seventeen autonomous regions accelerated the process of forming and re-forming personal, social and regional identities throughout the country. This division of powers between the central government and regional governments ('nationalities') stimulated new discourses of development, culture and 'patrimony' (heritage). In many areas, personal opinions had long been silenced in the cause of village, town or national unity. Family, neighbourhood and community were the mainstays of 'local' life. Concepts of democracy and development have had as much to do with social organisation and ideology as with geography and technology. People only begin to show concern for issues beyond their familiar surroundings when, as novelist Rosa Montero put it, 'we are convinced that the state belongs to all of us' (1995:318).

Limited political expectations and deeply engrained basic values carried over from the previous form of governance had to be replaced with the experience of democracy before people could begin to consider the possibilities of a 'common good' which might be regarded as genuinely common. It takes time for people to overcome so many years of passive acceptance of change instigated from 'above'. The mass immigration of Spaniards from the mainland into Mallorca, and increased numbers of tourists and foreign residents from all parts of the world are major elements in the social, economic and political transitions that have occurred on the island over the past forty years and make any concepts of 'collective sentiment' or 'common good' even more ambiguous than it was under the dictatorship.

The lives of Spaniards are now closely aligned with Europe, and with global communications and technology. For many Spaniards, the Europe that is being forged by international corporations and finance, joint technologies and centralised decision-making bureaucracies, threatens the loss of individuality and diversity between countries. However, a majority[2] of Spaniards want to be part of the new Europe and feel their interests are represented in the European Parliament and that their new constitution provides the opportunity to respond to any threats from outside influences, while encouraging regional identities, values, and political involvement in local, regional and national issues.

Tourism development in Mallorca

Tourism (and its associated services) has become a major source of income for the island. Tourism impacts not only on the cultural, social, economic and political environment but also on the natural and built environment. Government intervention in transport development assures that the road systems on the island are appropriate to accommodate tourism. The development of sophisticated, modern road systems and public and private transport change local and tourist behaviour and enlarge their experience. Roads connect the interior to the capital and to the coasts, often opening up spaces not previously accessible to so many different people. Overgrowth is cut back, hidden or inaccessible areas are revealed, nature is altered, controlled or adapted to meet new requirements. Mountain areas made accessible by new roads offer picturesque spots for tourist development, and village roads, once the scene of rites of passage that celebrated the shared beliefs and values that identified each community, are now public thoroughfares.

Changes in economic, social and political life cause roads to be altered. Many rural residents are now able to commute to work in the city and return to participate in village life each evening. Rural settings are being transformed by housing developments made possible by access roads. Activities and relationships between and within domestic groups and the wider economic and political community are changing. Roads have become the focus of local, foreign and national interest, and the varying opinions expressed reflect the changing concerns of the Mallorquins and other residents on the island. In *Mallorquí,* the language of the island, many idiomatic expressions use the word *cami* (road): *caminant sans cami* (wandering without a clear direction), *obrir cami* (to lead the way), *prendre cami* (to clear a path), *ésser a cami* (to be on one's way), *fora del cami* (off the track), *va por bon cami* (have the right idea), *cami tancat* (closed road, also no escape, no alternative, no exit). Thus, the inanimate road and the space it encompasses have become a symbol that triggers social action.

The Balearic Islands have been presented by Prime Minister José María Aznar as 'Spain's new success story' based on the development of cultural and sporting holidays, rural and agri-tourism. The climate and landscape of Mallorca is now seen as a product which attracts consumers from all around the world. The environment of the islands has become a source of security and identity for residents. As Hopewell notes, 'Under Franco, the relation of the environment to the indi vidual was repressive; now it is far more symbiotic' (1986:235). The present Balearic government is trying to plan development to 'harmonise with the environment' while giving priority to 'qualitative factors' and the Balearics' unique combination of climate, landscape, culture and heritage.

The current Minister of Tourism, a member of the Popular Party presently governing the Balearic Parliament, proposes that 'cultural awareness', 'environment', 'Balearic heritage' and 'identity' have to be reconsidered/reconstructed in the light of 'changing demands' and he is trying to convert 'mass tourism' (large numbers, cheap hotels and services) to 'quality tourism', (less but better accommodation, less people with greater spending power per capita and 'cultural activities' which inform them of the islands' history, traditions, etc.). Government officials are critically inspecting hotels, rescinding permits from those that do not meet higher standards and subsidising new 'rural hotels' and 'agri-tourism' under the assumption that the climate will no longer suffice to attract the foreign currency which has helped Spain 'arrive' on the charts of successful European economies.

Reconstruction of the 'image' the Balearic Government wants to project to its citizens as well as to tourists entails some sort of compromise between the various political parties, 'local' village and urban citizens, and international agencies and visitors, on what each means by environment, culture, heritage or identity. Each of the three islands has a different set of priorities. On Mallorca, 'local' citizens include Mallorquins, Andalucians, Catalans and other mainland Spaniards. Culture, heritage and identity are thus disputed between people from different parts of the country and often in different languages (Mallorquin—for some a dialectal variant of Catalan, Catalan itself, and Castillian Spanish). Visitors may seek culture in the form of monuments, folk customs, museums or art galleries, but many are often more interested in sun, sand and sex than in Balearic culture and heritage. Culture in the Balearics has to be defined as relations between groups with quite distinct agendas and symbols rather than a unified social totality. In order to plan ahead these varied perceptions must be considered.

At the moment, the government meets any objections to its plans head on: 'protesters' are labelled 'reactionary', 'self-interested' or 'foreign' implying they know little about the issues they criticise. Labelling critics allows the government to ignore or devalue non-professionals, NGOs, women and other pressure groups. A vivid example highlights this process. In 1995 the Parliament was considering the territorial plan for the islands of Ibiza and Formentera and the areas that had been marked as ‘Natural Parks’. The control of these areas would affect the interests of private parties and time was allowed for objections and requests for exclusion prior to completing the plan. Two years later, the president of the Parliament requested that his family property be removed from those listed so that they could develop part of it. The Parliament discussed this and voted to allow the withdrawal.

The opposition parties pointed out that the ruling Popular Party demonstrated that they had no clear definition of ‘natural’ and no intention to protect ‘nature’ if they were willing to alter their criteria each time someone with vested interests requested changes. Those who maintain access to the decision-making apparatus both as members of government, or through social and economic interaction with members continue to influence political actions. There is a continuous usage of ‘traditional’ social ties that have been handed down through the generations, but the meanings and implications are recreated to meet contemporary circumstances. Changing allegiances can lead to altered policies. The ease with which alliances and ideologies are altered for personal profit is a common feature of development planning on the islands.

If the government’s meaning of ‘development’ is expansion, aggrandisement, modernisation, etc. then this development seems to be designed to draw attention to the advanced state of the island’s infrastructure for tourism. Development projects are seen to reflect positively on the ‘party image’ and are a means to attract large investment in party politics and island infrastructure. If development is governed by the needs of tourism and external demand, though, the resident population begins to question their role in this development and has difficulty identifying with the governments’ priorities. During the past three years, ‘developments’ on Mallorca have included the construction of a tunnel from Soller to Palma, *Son Reus,* a highly expensive, controversial and ecologically dubious waste-processing plant for the island, a new, modern, technically sophisticated airport to accommodate the thirteen million visitors that come to the island each year, a new prison (‘one of the most modern in Europe’), the widening of many roads between villages, towns, the main city of Palma and the airport, and plans for future development of major highways to all parts of the island.

The very direction of these projects is in complete contradiction to the new types of tourism the tourism board wants to attract. Rural tourism and agri-tourism highlight the physical and cultural qualities of the island and suggest a return to a simpler form of life, to agriculture (or at least the setting where that once took place), home cooking, pastoral landscapes, with hay drying in the barn, surrounded by the sounds and smells of nature. In some cases, rural tourism has involved converting large country estates (*possesios* or *fincas*) into five-star hotels with nouvelle cuisine and luxurious fittings within the ancient stone walls, and where wine cellars and olive presses once supported an entire rural population. The initial plan to help farmers and other rural populations to 'capitalise' on their heritage, properties and particular way of life by bringing tourists in to discover the island's natural resources and experience 'real' Mallorquin life, has succeeded in helping some farms to maintain their rural existence and cover their overheads in the face of agricultural decline.[3]

Many foreigners have purchased the larger estates and converted them into rural hotels or private dwellings and property-burdened Mallorquin entrepreneurs have been able to draw on government funds to refurbish their estates by converting parts to rural tourism. This sort of tourist development also affects the values and lifestyles of the populations in these rural areas. Land once used for agriculture, associated with class differences and repression, is converted to job-producing development and considered to be a positive form of environmentally aware modernisation. The land and any buildings on it would once again be cared for by local people, but under proper employment conditions that allowed them to reap the rewards of their labour. More affluent Mallorquins can enjoy the luxury of their island heritage. The variety of interpretations of rural and agri-tourism are additional indicators of the multiple meanings associated with tourism planning in Mallorca.

Citizens' concerns

In contrast to the government's plans, various citizens' groups see development in terms of improved infrastructures for 'deprived' areas (housing projects, gypsy dwellings, etc.), social and educational programmes for youngsters in these areas, drug rehabilitation programmes, subsidised housing for first-time buyers, jobs for the unemployed in new industries, public safety, family planning, preventive health care, more public transport and less road development. Parks, public libraries, university training and solar energy are additional improvements which are listed among the concerns of conservationists.[4] Attached to all of these citizens' concerns is the impact on the environment, which to them means the ambience within which 'local' people live their lives, the landscape they have helped to form and inhabit and the quality of the amenities available within that space: water, light, food, employment and leisure.

Conservationists insist that:

> [A] general politics of conservation and cultural heritage is necessary to achieve a respectable, elegant and sustainable future. While other countries are discussing putting limits on the use of carbon rich combustibles and seeking new, efficient and cleaner technologies, the Balearics continue to see asphalt and cement as signs of progress, but their progress is unsustainable.
> (Martinez 1997)

According to *Els Verds* (the Green Party) and *GOB* (Ornithological Group of the Balearics) a 1997 road development agreement between the Balearic government and the state will provide 57,650 million pesetas (about 230 million pounds sterling) for 29 highway projects. It is estimated that these projects will destroy 700 hectares of forest, agricultural terrain, and protected natural spaces. Although the budget has been set for these highways (motorways and connecting roads), no territorial or transport plans have been elaborated. This agreement was doubly criticised for having been decided without 'a public debate on transport' (*El Dia del Mundo,* 8 October 1997).

The above agreement and the conflicts that surrounded a project to widen the road that runs along the north-west coast of the island suggest there is an entirely political and instrumental conception of development practised by the government, separated from any kind of long-term planning or environmental policy. Private interests continue to take precedence over collective or environmental objectives. Expanding roads depends on some cooperation between property owners, municipalities and the government. They have to be cut through privately owned lands and the owners must decide which areas can be sacrificed to the cause of 'progress'. When the road from Valldemossa to Deià along the north-west coast of the island was widened (in 1986) there was a year's delay in one section due to the owners of one estate. There were sixteen heirs to the estate who could not agree on which lands they were willing to cede and the complexities of legal expropriation took months to resolve. The shape of the highway was determined both by agricultural priorities and extended kinship relationships. Today with the rise of employment in the service sectors of the island, tourism and heavy transport are influencing the shape and utility of roads. Most islanders and tourists drive cars to work, to shop, and on excursions. The average daily traffic on the Valldemossa to Deià road in 1986 was 1,029 vehicles of which 8 per cent were heavy-weight lorries and coaches. Today, those numbers are greatly increased.

Major motorways have been designed to connect villages with the city, the airport and coastal areas. This is a sign of 'progress' that allows islanders to feel they are part of a wider metropolis and everyone appears to benefit from these excellent road systems. However, a plan to enlarge the second half of the Valldemossa-Deià-Soller road has met with major protests over the impact such a road would have on this area, considered to be one of the most beautiful on the island. It is agreed that a straighter road would benefit many who work and commute between the two places, and it would allow easier access to many others. The objections concern the manner in which the plan was presented and the design, which includes bypasses, guard rails and the removal of 1,000-year-old olive trees and stone terraces all along the route. Activist groups' concerns reflect 'global issues' rather than just those of the island and highlight the importance of the environment as an international objective. Conservationists, social reformers and local protest groups have created sufficient tensions to delay the completion of the project.

It is clear that all members of society do not necessarily want the same things and conflicts occur both between and inside social and political groups. However, the one thing these groups have in common is that they are rivals for the same government attention and economic resources. This means that 'the politicians must consider the objectives of each and every group as part of the same social dynamic, not fully comprehensible if not understood as a whole' (Ucelay Da Cal 1995:32). Tourism adds a further dimension by drawing in international forces so that what once might have remained 'local' conflicts over development have now become nationalised and internationalised (see Appadurai 1994). All of these socio-economic and environmental forces and political system characteristics operate to shape the direction of development for the island's future.

Today the proceeds from tourism and its related activities provide over 80 per cent of the Balearic income. The Balearics have the third highest per capita income in all of Spain (preceded by Navarra and the Canary Islands). This 'success' has had its shortcomings and the government and some of the citizens want to curb the excesses they blame on mass tourism, by ‘protecting the environment’ and ‘controlling’ the ‘form’ tourism takes in the future while maintaining the essential income tourism provides for the island and the nation. As we have seen, the government’s preferred development strategy is toward ‘quality tourism’ which involves the construction of additional roads, five-star hotels, golf courses and other leisure pursuits. Research has shown that golf courses require approximately 350,000 cubic metres of water per day, while 1,300 tourists showering once a day require approximately 150,000 cubic metres of water per day. Thus, quality tourism’s demand on ‘natural resources’ such as water would be greater than that of mass tourism. Additional problems of unemployment would also be dramatic if too many mass tourism hotels were closed. Despite these shortcomings, there are symbolic issues associated with wealthy or famous visitors and golf courses and the government has an economic rationale for supporting ‘quality’ tourism.

Tourism was introduced to allow the country to rise from the ‘backwardness’ caused by the Civil War and the Second World War. The income from tourism solved the major problems of hunger, unemployment, education and access to new technology. Tourism may have allowed Mallorquins to reinforce their group identity in contrast to the many visitors they have hosted during the past fifty years. However, tourism in its broadest meaning has not led to any greater understanding between the many visitors and the local Mallorquins, although in specific localities foreign residents participate actively in ‘local’ life (Waldren 1996). Tourism cannot be set apart from other forms of development during this period, but it is clear that the Mallorquins’ access to these advancements has come through the income and stimulus provided by tourism. The material signs of modernity are evident in every Mallorquin home, in the cars they drive, the clothes they wear and the lives they lead.

Representative democracy

The Balearic government is made up of the Parliament or Autonomous Government (representatives from each of the islands), an Insular Council on each island and the city councils in each town and village. The islands are represented in the state government by a member of the Parliament. The conflicts and competitions between the various councils and the Parliament have been increasing since the beginnings of democracy in 1981. The heads of the insular councils vie with the President of the

Parliament for prestigious acts and projects. They compete for financing. The national, interinsular and insular bureaucracies overlap, conflict and contradict one another at every turn.

The present Balearic parliament is dominated by the Popular Party while the Insular Council is headed by break-away members of PP who formed their own Union Mallorquin Party (UM). Critical voices are those of the small minority of *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), the *GOB* (Ornithological Group of the Balearics) and *Els Verds* (the Green Party). Anyone who criticises 'development' (which continues to mean highly visible projects such as refurbishment of 'heritage' buildings and the construction of 'modern' sport and technology complexes) on the island is seen to be accusing the government of destroying 'their own' heritage and incapable of planning 'their own' future.

The complex relationship between 'tourism' and 'heritage' revealed in the tensions between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. If a building is deemed to be part of the 'national heritage', its value increases and its owners often experience difficulty in preserving it according to strict heritage rules, so they either require funding from the government or the government intervenes and is forced to purchase it (at an increased price due to its importance) to preserve 'the island heritage'. Many archaeological 'heritage' sites have been destroyed by landowners, tourists and local 'collectors' before the authorities could decide whether or not to impose protection laws or finance reconstruction or conservation. Public acknowledgement and interest in these sites, their preservation and protection has not yet resulted in any government subventions. Some archaeological sites on the island of Menorca were purchased and restored by the *Fondation de les Illes Balears*. This is a private foundation owned by the ex-president of the Balearic Parliament into which many 'gifts' from various projects he approved while in office were channelled (see below).

Well aware of the islands' dependence on tourism as the main income-generating industry, the government must show a respect for foreign investment and demands while maintaining an image of preserving the natural resources of the Balearics, their heritage and identity. Government projects must reflect a concern for the values formed during the past decades' interaction with tourists and resident foreigners. So although foreigners may not have formal rights of citizenship, their investment potential gives them (or their agents) the power to influence local politics. In the case of road development, conservationists and foreign resident groups have accused the politicians, hotel owners, travel agents and developers of destroying the very wonders that have made the islands rich. It is claimed by many that construction promoters, travel agents and hotel owners have always been the ‘elite’ with power on the island. Their spokesman until 1997 was Gabriel Cañellas, the President of the Balearic Parliament who was re-elected for his third term of office in 1995. Members of this elite still manage to gain major development contracts, and many of their sons and daughters hold local government positions. Island politicians can draw on European Community funding, national, insular and local money and power to support and instigate projects which can provide favours for supporters as well as personal gain.

The differing concepts of development discussed above suggest that party politics often take precedence over democratic concerns and the ‘real’ interests and forces in society, however complex and contradictory they may be, are not represented in parliament. Such a parliament cannot harmonise the different interests there are in the society it represents. Local, insular, interinsular and national politics are orchestrated from ‘above’. Each party has its own discourse of knowledge and identity. Local politicians now have party support networks all around the country and the backing gives them more autonomy and power. They can combine the old *enchufe* system (based on connections through family or wealth) with the new political party connections.

Tourism paves the way to the future

Over the past forty years an entire service sector has been created to deal with the massive influx of seasonal visitors to Mallorca. Prior to this time there had been a large peasant sector and a small but powerful group of large landowners and religious authorities who exercised social control. In most areas, development was initiated and financed by foreign companies to meet the necessities of foreign-organised tourism. Seafront properties were purchased along the southern and eastern coasts of the island. Many of these lands were owned by women who had inherited them from parents who had willed their larger, inland, income-producing agricultural properties to their sons. Coastal property was not particularly valuable and was seen to provide a ‘back-up’ for women who usually married the sons of other landowners. Some Mallorquin women gained important economic power when large foreign companies began to offer vast sums for these coastal properties to build hotels, bars, restaurants and souvenir shops.

When development is financed by outside firms and created to meet the needs of foreign visitors' lifestyles, social and moral values are often restructured to cater for outsiders. In Mallorca, men and women emigrated to the new resorts to take up a variety of jobs that required them to learn new skills, languages, concepts of time, gender, family and culture. Migration from the mainland and rural areas to the city or newly developed coastal resorts brought about a decline in agricultural activities, turned small villages into dormitory towns, and led to an enormous increase in those employed in the service sector.

In time, the desire for modernity, increased demand for material goods, more free time, global communications (telephone, television, radio, computers, Internet, air travel, etc.) and easy access to distant places (through improved transport) offered advantages that, when combined, made island social life more varied. Modernisation is often blamed for the disappearance of local culture, but in many areas of the island people have found that modernity has helped them to revive a respect for traditional values and customs by restructuring concepts to meet changing circumstances (see Waldren 1996). Others believe that this process of restructuring their lifestyles has caused them to lose much of their 'quality of life' (Greenwood 1989; Picard 1993; Boissevain 1996). Mallorquins have learned a new sense of respect for the environment which has grown through tourism's identification and appreciation of the island's 'natural' beauty and climate. Social identity, once based on family, land ownership or pride in one's work, has been redefined to accommodate the new forms of income and lifestyle brought in by tourism and is now available to people from different social and economic backgrounds. Modernisation has been combined with traditional values to allow Mallorquins to appreciate their heritage, and there is a desire for their politicians to respect these new perspectives.

Recent meetings of the Autonomous government have dealt with the planning and budgeting of development projects in the hopes of avoiding the accusations of competing parties that the government is not properly handling the funds received for development. Apparently, the 1994 budget exceeded its estimated expenditures for the year such that 50 per cent of the additional funds required included work that was not previously planned and had been necessitated by incomplete or poor planning for the original projects. A *Tribunal de Cuentas* (auditors) appointed to do a routine check on the Balearic Parliament's yearly accounts criticised them for neglecting to submit some of the required documents. For example, receipts for the dispersal of funds, especially in the case of payments made to small and medium size companies after a project was completed were delayed, lost or just forgotten. One of the projects questioned by the auditors concerned the second part of the 'Central Autoroute' which was put out to tender in December 1989. 'It needed nine additional contracts all of which were won by the same contractor' and added 20 per cent to the originally approved budget. Many projects needed modification because there had been no preliminary studies carried out to assess the terrain and the difficulties that might arise. The auditors requested that the Balearic government follow a greater rigour in the elaboration and supervision of construction projects so that they show that they understand all of the elements involved in the project and can, therefore, avoid modifying previously approved contracts. The 1996 National Plan for Motorways *(Autopistas)* had a budget of 800,000 million pesetas but the costs were, in fact, much more. This sort of laissez-faire spending, once considered idleness and incompetence, has raised accusations of political corruption (Del Pozo in *El Dia Del Mundo,* 8 October 1997).

The Balearic government's response to these accusations has taken the form of action, inaction, verbal defence or silence depending on the circumstances in each situation. There was a suggestion that the criteria for selecting the companies that will carry out the projects need to be more 'objective, ordered and explicit'. The 'tenders' must be more precise.

In defence of overspending budgets, the Economics minister noted that 'differences always exist between a preliminary budget and the completion of a project. This was and will always be the case.' He gave little importance to the criticisms of his budgets and remarked that 'in fifty years we will still be having the same problems and the same criticisms will arise'(ibid.). Does this imply that where there are varied political groups, the political group in power can never do anything correctly (please all of the people all of the time) and therefore there are times when they must just move on despite the criticism? Or does it mean that many decisions are made within party circles regardless of conflicting views?[5] The answer is revealed through 'unplanned' events.

The collapse of one of the island's major investment firms in 1994 revealed a number of large payments made to individuals and institutions closely involved with the Popular Party (PP), the political party itself and its leaders who had governed the island since the inception of Parliament in 1983. One cheque for 50 million pesetas (about £200,000) was signed by the head of the company which had won the bid to build the Soller to Palma Tunnel. Research revealed that this money had been given to a private foundation named *Fondation de les Illes Balears,* presided over by the President of the Parliament and leader of the PP, Gabriel Cañellas. Evidence of public funds being paid into the private foundation of the President of the Parliament and further accusations of the misuse of road development funding for party politics was to be 'the road to ruin' for the recently re-elected Balearic politician.

José María Aznar, the PP candidate for the Presidency of Spain, contacted Cañellas (just eleven days after he had been convincingly reelected President by the Balearic voters). Aznar made it quite clear that despite Cañellas's re-election, the scandals associated with his office would be most detrimental to the party's success in the national elections.[6] He was asked to resign 'for the good of the party'. 'Democracy' had been evidenced in the voting procedures used in the Balearic elections, but the power of state politics obviously took precedence over any decisions made by Balearic (regional) voters. It seemed as though the future of the Spanish nation depended on Cañellas's resignation. Cañellas resigned and Aznar was elected president of Spain. A close disciple of Cañellas was appointed president of the Balearic Parliament. He was replaced after less than a year by another member of his party. However, *Cañellismo*[7] continues to dominate the political climate even after Cañellas was put on trial and convicted in 1997.

The planning and construction of roads continues to be a major area of contention around the island with more and more people becoming involved in protest marches, claiming that the government is allowing commercial interests to direct their projects and neglecting conservation, environmental problems and local voices. Sophisticated transport projects are seen by the government to be an essential part of the process of becoming a modern, cosmopolitan setting while critics see the extension of asphalt into rural areas as a blight on the landscape. Complaints over the large budget paid in advance for the widening of the 8-km Deià to Soller road, which runs along the north-west coast of the island, revealed that only one kilometre of road work had begun during a two-year period and the funds allotted for the further 7 km had been used up. A new tender was opened and another company won the contract. Three years later only 2.5 km were finished, the rest was in a terrible state of disrepair and no farther funding was available for the project.

In a conversation I had with the Minister of Tourism and Transport, he made it clear that the government believed that the conditions of the road had to be radically altered to bear the burden of large lorries carrying building materials, water, and cement, coaches carrying tourists and an excessive number of private and tourist cars. He said it was ‘a miracle that no major landslide had occurred all these years with the increased pressure on that road’. In reply to my query about the millions of pesetas that had been spent, the minister told me that ‘Roads do not cost the taxpayer of the Balearic Islands anything. They are paid for by the contractors, European Community funds, bankers and Party commitments.’ He did not consider road taxes, fuel taxes, or value added tax on purchased items (VAT) as taxpayers’ money, nor the fact that the contractor has to finance his project through funds drawn from regional, national and international banks. He did not mention that the money had been used up, that re-occurring protests, accusations of corruption, and petitions condemning the road project had slowed things down, or that the impossibility of reaching an acceptable agreement between the planners, bus companies, car rental agents, the residents whose properties would be affected, the conservationists and the many residents and visitors who feared a major highway would ‘spoil’ the ‘natural beauty’ of the area were also factors to be considered. In fact, the completion of the tunnel from Soller to Palma also cut down the traffic on the Soller-Deià road, making the completion of this road project a very low priority on the government’s list.

Conclusions

Transport developments have revolutionised travel and radically altered the ‘natural’ physical landscape of Mallorca. The conflicts over road ‘developments’ in the Balearic Islands over the past decades reflect the varying ways in which different groups and individuals have responded to change in island development and reveal how sentiments and identity have been socially constructed, negotiated and reconstructed in this particular autonomous region of Spain. Development has brought about many positive changes, but it has also tended to reinforce political and economic interests of some groups over others. The number of political parties active on the island has increased yearly since democracy was established. Each party constructs its own programme of further development and attempts to convince the public of its efficacy through their own party discourse.

This volume highlights the way that government agencies often use technical (scientific, economic or statistical) discourses and powerful associations to draw up development policies and to justify their projects. Different political ideologies create different ‘representations’ of space, time and identity, and local and supra-local collectivities plan development and the necessary infrastructures to carry this through from distinct perspectives. Ecological representation is socialised in different ways by various interest groups. In Mallorca, requests to open new roads, usually referred to as ‘tracks’ when in ‘protected areas’, must offer several options, from which local, insular and government councils can choose that which causes least ‘impact’ (social, ecological and political). Often this occurs after the fact. Variations in perspectives of the environment are evident in differences in planning laws between local councils and the Parliament *‘Govern Balear’*. The Parliament encouraged one local council to grant permission to a well-known celebrity to build a large hotel and housing development on an estate he purchased in their municipality. The local council is concerned with the impact on the environment and that their water and sewage infrastructure will not cope with such an increased demand. The celebrity is threatening to withdraw his project. These kinds of aggressive tactics will not solve any of their problems. Developers, councils and the government are using competing discourses.

In the case of tourist development, the fact that there have been three Ministers of Tourism during the past five years makes accountability difficult. New plans for protecting the ‘environment’, for reconstructing the ‘urban landscape’ and the rules and regulations that should apply in each area have been altered by each new minister. Laws, plans for particular sectors, and statements designed to sell these new ideals to the public were seldom carried through to completion before a new minister was appointed and he began to change the ‘rules of the game’. In some areas houses built by local Mallorquins, under one set of rules, were said to be illegal by new rules, built without permits and ordered to be knocked down. Each ‘new group’ expresses themselves through arguments inherited from the past, in which the same terms (planning, permits, environment, urban landscape, natural space, sustainability, harmony, etc.) are used again and again, but with changed meanings.

The controversy over road development has been a major news item throughout the last year and actually led to the resignation of the Balearic parliamentary president. Many projects were completed despite protests and vastly increased budget requirements but other projects remain unfinished. The government seemed to move ahead on those projects which raised their profile to outside audiences (tourism, state government, international investment) and provoked the least complaints or, at least, those where they could turn the complaints to their own advantage. The impact of protesters is never directly acknowledged but the delay of projects once highly supported and proclaimed as part of the government's development strategies to 'modernise' the road network on the island is clear evidence that the protesters are beginning to have some effect. The 'psychic landscape' has begun to change.[8] Protesters are beginning to be regarded as concerned individuals and groups rather than 'reactionary', 'self-interested', or 'foreign'. In fact, recently many politicians have been described as 'foreign' in their disregard or ignorance of local concerns and values. Perhaps it is time for the government to stop 'wandering without a clear direction' *(caminant sans cami),* by drawing from its own language, heritage and knowledge to 'clear a path' *(prendre cami),* avoid 'dead ends' *(cami tancat)* and 'take the right road' *(va por bon cami)* to pave the way to the future (see Waldren 1996:215).

Popular culture (for cultural anthropology) is the site of struggles over identities where, in the progressive outcome, diverse oppressed groups divided from one another by culture as much as any other factor unite as 'the people' against 'the power bloc' (Gramsci 1996:133). Campaigns against road-building and state-subsidised environmental destruction are being supported more and more by the very people who once criticised the process of protest and anyone who dared to go against the status quo. As Gramsci comments,

> The popular is not produced by imposing a dominant on a subordinate culture, but by the dominant reaching into the cultural formations of subordinate groups, selectively appropriating elements, and stitching them into new discourses. These in turn become resources for still other groups to use in negotiating identities and meanings, and they may also be distributed to the groups whose cultural forms were initially appropriated.
>
> (Ibid.: 134)

The central theme of this book is the implications of the varied forms and expressions of knowledge, broadly 'economic' and 'cultural' on the recreation of identities and sentiments. In the Balearics we see how identity has been recreated or reinterpreted to include the environment and local heritage sites. The major features of that identity have been enhanced by the perceptions of tourists and foreign visitors who have helped the Mallorquins to re-value their knowledge of culture and environment in a way they could not while it was seen as a burden. The history of the island has been shaped by encounters with various outside groups—'Moors', Catalans, the state, tourists—and Balearic identity has gained strength in contrast to all these others with whom they have co-existed over the generations.

Social and political life in Mallorca is based on the adaptation of old models to meet new conditions. Conservatism still pervades modern life despite the new materialistic and social values introduced from the outside. A preference for the old and established over the new and untried is seen in social relations, public behaviour and attitudes, as well as in political action. However, the political and economic progress of the past decades has allowed new voices to be heard and different ideologies to be considered.

Today, politicians are often seen to emulate the negative qualities most often associated with ‘otherness’ in their dealings (corruption, lack of cohesive culture, favouritism, personal gain and lack of social conscience). Corruption, the combination of tenure of formal office with activities for private enrichment, seems to be an unavoidable consequence (or advantage) that comes with authority. It is an accepted part of the political process that leads to social transformations. However, today’s politicians have lost the subtlety that is needed to cover their tracks, their audience is politically aware and may lead many more politicians down ‘the road to ruin’.

Notes

1 The Spanish newspapers consulted included: *El País, El Día del Mundo, Diario de Mallorca, Balear, El Veu de Soller,* and *Ultima Hora.* All translations are by the author. English language papers included: *Majorca Daily Bulletin, Herald Tribune, Financial Times, Guardian Weekend* and *European*.

2 ‘Majority’ here refers to the referendum of 1986 when Spain voted to remain part of NATO. Despite strong anti-militarist feeling, remaining part of NATO was presented by the Socialist (PSOE) government as the only means to perpetuate democracy and gain membership of the European Community and the Maastricht Treaty.

3 The European Community offers subsidies to encourage cereal producers to increase their production, and sheep farms to enlarge their flocks. They have added an additional sum to support the vast almond plantations that once provided almonds to many parts of the world and have been greatly neglected since tourism began, and as competition from California and North Africa gained increased sectors of the market. The Balearic government is subsidising milk production.

4 The Natural History Society of the Balearic Islands forms the base for conservationists on the island. They have been actively involved in informing the government and the public about the necessity to ‘negotiate’ the impact

of development on the environment. They use the term ‘negotiate’ hoping that the government and wider public will respond better to recognisable business terminology than they have to the language and information produced by scientists and evidence from industrial development in other areas of the world. Conservationists claim that they want to listen to and be heard, to give and take, to achieve an agreement with others through exchange of ideas, information and compromise (Martinez 1997).

5 During fieldwork in Deià, a mountain village on the north-west coast of Mallorca, I was told that:

> [Y]ou do what you have to do and then you let others discover what you have done and do or say what they like about it. It is terribly important to carry out decisions made within one’s household before the outside is allowed to gain information or obstruct your actions.
>
> As in the card game Truc, played in the cafes around the island, you never put all your cards on the table at one time. Games, like life, are played in pairs and you communicate with your partner through signals that others do not understand. The object of the game is to deceive your opponents. Caught off guard they will need time to retaliate, which will give you time to plan your next action. Those who play the game know the rules; the challenge is to outsmart your opponents, even if only momentarily. Once an action is completed, it does not matter if others are in accord or not.
>
> (Waldren 1996:94)

6 A series of corruption scandals occurring throughout 1994 and 1995, implicating major financial, police, administrative, and PSOE political figures throughout Spain allowed Aznar to construct his campaign around issues of ‘honesty’ in government. Cañellas was a thorn in his campaign strategy.

7 *Cañellismo* refers to a form of government styled and lead by people who share the same ideas as G.Cañellas, the deposed President of the Balearic Parliament. The man that replaced Cañellas, Soler, was in conference for five hours with Cañellas being informed of the changes he wanted and did not want in Soler’s government policies and cabinet. Soler did not heed his directions and he was forced out by the *Cañellistas,* and resigned less than a year into office.

8 The expression ‘psychic landscape’ was coined in an article on the Fairmile Five, the protesters who managed to hold up the construction of the last section of the Fairmile motorway in the UK. The five had tunnelled under the trees to prevent any heavy equipment arriving.

> What the tunnellers were not to know was that the psychic landscape had changed. Word had got out that Animal (they had all adopted nicknames) and company have been digging for Britain, and Britain was digging them…. Where two weeks before the papers called them ‘scum’, ‘scroungers’, and ‘anarchists’, now they had been transformed into model youth heroes.
>
> (*Guardian Weekly,* 22 February 1997)

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Chapter 8

When opposite worldviews attract

A case of tourism and local development in Southern France

Christian Lindknud

Introduction

The following case study[1] from a small rural setting, Gassin in Southern France, is an example of how development discourses concerning tourism may provoke social battles and positioning in a setting which at first sight would appear as yet another case of social decomposition and rural crisis. The example is taken from a small locality in which the population in many ways balances between a rural past and a modern future involved with tourism. By approaching the concept *development* with great care, and with respect for its complexity in an equally complex social context, I would thus like to point to some surprising social effects that tourism may have. I hope this example will clarify some of the risks of conceptual oversimplification which we face when dealing with local development, and in particular when we try to shed light on power-relations and oppositions characteristic of such situations.

The adaptation of rural settings to ‘modern times’ has often been shown to be hazardous for local social structures. In France, as in many other parts of Europe, it has long been argued that rural communities facing the forces of modernisation and agricultural specialisation are bound to the out (e.g. Buller and Lowe 1990:33–4; Mendras 1984, 1994). As the agricultural basis for occupying entire local populations disappears and more and more of the younger inhabitants turn to urban zones to find alternative employment, these rural settings seem socially doomed. In France this evolution even led Henri Mendras to pronounce ‘the end’ of the country’s peasantry in his classic book from 1967, *La Fin des Paysans* (Mendras 1984). As Mendras himself noted three decades later, it seems, however, that this critical situation for the French, as for many other European rural zones, is being moderated by surprising new forms of social interaction, combining urban and rural modes of life (Mendras 1994). Thus, a large number of otherwise threatened rural populations have, for example, tried to reply to rural exodus by turning towards the seemingly ever-expanding tourism industry; a choice that has been claimed to pose new and dramatic challenges to local social life, as these same villages sooner or later are likely to get overrun by tourists, and turned into set-pieces for pseudo-performances for the 'culture'-consuming visitors (Smith 1989; MacCannell 1989).

These gloomy scenarios may well illustrate some of the frequently sad consequences of attempts to turn small rural settings into tourist localities. Indeed, in this chapter I report from a setting that has undergone just such a classical modernisation of its rural sector and of social relations in general, and is now deeply involved with tourism. As I hope it will be clear, however, the change of this particular village into a tourist attraction and subsequent related changes of the physical structure of the village have in fact turned it into a locality 'vibrant with people and potential and tense repression' rather than an 'empty meeting ground' (MacCannell 1992:2). Indeed, debates associated with how to 'develop' or not to 'develop' the setting under the tourist gaze have provoked numerous indirect clashes between inhabitants who otherwise might be expected to avoid communication. Rather than offering yet another example of different 'development' discourses clearly divided between 'authorities' and 'locals', between developers and affected, this case study shows that such distinctions may be highly relative, reflecting complex social processes, where many different worldviews meet in more or less direct dialogue. Contests over the development and use of the physical space in the setting serve as arenas for negotiations of social identities in a complex, 'footloose' social landscape (Hannerz 1992:5). This suggests that development associated with tourism, in cases where modernisation has seemed to destroy any basis for social relations within a locality, can have surprising socialising effects, and can provoke an encounter of and negotiation between otherwise opposing worldviews.

The setting and the context

The municipality of Gassin covers a widespread area at the root of the Peninsula of Saint-Tropez. Part of it faces the coastline, and the hinterland is dispersed over a hilly terrain, covered with woods of parasol pine characteristic of the area, and surrounded by plains where the vines of the local wine industry dominate. Today, the composition of the population is rather complex; it consists of permanent and semi-permanent residents and an unknown number of secondary residents, and counts, depending of the season, around 3,500 inhabitants. These live in clusters of smaller houses and villas, *des lotissements,* or separate villas situated throughout the territory on the plains. In the centre of the municipality, the village of Gassin is situated on a hill a few hundred metres above sea-level. The original part of this village consists of around 200 small closely-clustered stone houses, some of which date back to the twelfth century.

The village of Gassin is in many ways an example of the drastic specialisation and depopulation that French rural areas underwent just after the Second World War and into the late 1960s (Benoît and Irrmann 1989; Buller and Lowe 1990; Mendras 1984:14–23). Until then, the main occupation in Gassin was wine production and most people worked in local vineyards on the plains. Others maintained small-scale silkworm production in their houses or the production of cork for wine bottles. Every now and then the village received a rare tourist who was then lodged there. From the 1940s, however, the socio-economic situation in the area changed dramatically. This period saw a general modernisation of the French rural sector: the vineyards in Gassin were rapidly specialised into using only seasonal workers from Portugal and Italy, and today the biggest of the vineyards are owned primarily by foreign investors. The small industries in the village ceased to exist and small shops in the village closed down. Inhabitants from the period remember the village in the late 1950s as ‘nothing but a pile of ruins’.

During the same period, other important demographic changes took place in the region. Tourism started to gain in importance as a trade in the area, notably in the neighbouring village of Saint-Tropez. Ever since the French painter Paul Signac discovered the small, isolated fishing village in the 1890s, and was subsequently joined by a small number of aristocrats and artist celebrities, this village has been the preferred holiday locality for the French high society and artistic elite (Dorme 1990; Peirugues 1994). From the 1940s, the exclusiveness of this upper-class seaside resort changed with what John Urry has called ‘the democratisation of travel’ (1990:20–3), exemplified in Gassin, as in many other cases (e.g. Gilligan 1981:65–8), by the construction of a railway and new roads, which meant improved possibilities for travel to the area for more people. Following the success of the 1956 film *Et Dieu créa la femme,* which starred Brigitte Bardot and was filmed in the village of Saint-Tropez, the peninsula rapidly developed into a top attraction for both the upper class and a new class of mass tourists. This increasingly intensive tourism in Saint-Tropez was strongly influential on the socio-economic development of the neighbouring villages, notably Gassin.

In the same period, as in many other French villages at that time, while the younger population left the village for the cities, a new type of inhabitant turned up in Gassin. As if in reply to the rural exodus, an urban exodus started to take shape, reflecting a renewed interest in the disappearing countryside among people living in the cities. The result of this in Gassin was a significant number of immigrants coming from the cities, and either settling down in secondary residences, or as permanent residents. Following this nation-wide renewed interest in disappearing rural lifestyles, many of the new inhabitants gradually took over the old, often empty houses, and renovated them substantially through the 1950s and 1960s (Benoît and Irrmann 1989; Buller and Lowe 1990:14–17; McDonald 1990:181). At first, it was this thorough renovation which made the village of Gassin a popular side attraction for tourists visiting Saint-Tropez. Today, the houses are still kept in a rustic fashion with rough stones, and the clustering of small houses around small paths and passages adds up to the image underlined in the tourism discourse about the village as ‘typical’, with ‘historic’ houses in continuity with a past which reaches back to the period where the Moors dominated the region; the view from the village is a view over ‘Moor country’ *(Le Pays des Maures)*.

In the early period of change and rural decomposition, however, Gassin experienced other types of immigration that have added to the sociocultural complexity of the population today. First, from the 1930s onwards, an important number of seasonal workers from a relatively poor region on the other side of the north Italian border settled down permanently and took over some of the ‘ruins’ in the village. Following the development of Saint-Tropez into an attraction, more systematic tourism started to develop in Gassin. If the new inhabitants from Italy did not find work on the vineyards on the peninsula, they lived from renting flats or entire houses to upper-class tourists, who enjoyed the ‘rustic, primitive village where Russian aristocrats shared out-door toilets with wine-peasants’, as a tourist from then, now a permanent resident, remembers.

Finally, as the tourism of the 1960s turned into the industry of mass tourism, there was an influx of people from all over France, many of whom had been tourists before in the area. The new residents tried to profit from the new job opportunities brought about by the growth of the tourism sector with its hotels, restaurants and camp-sites. These aspects of social change in the area have meant an evolution in the socio-economic basis of life, and not least a dramatic turbulence and dispersion in the composition of the population. The municipality today is inhabited by a highly heterogeneous population representing many social and cultural backgrounds. In short, Gassin is a setting which has been under profound social transformation and has been affected by both general socio-demographic and socio-economic tendencies ('modernisation'), as well as a particular development and change in the structure of the population and the crystallisation of the municipality as a locality. That social life in Gassin is facing the conditions of 'modern times', and at the same time must find a way to handle an important tourist industry, has resulted in different levels of more or less planned development in the area. But it has also sparked efforts from different sectors of the population to influence and control such strong social change leading to different efforts to deal with tourism and 'modern times'. In Gassin, the concept of 'development' is first of all bound up with the symbolic role of tourism and objectified culture.

Tourism and objectified culture

What differentiates Gassin from an ordinary collection of old houses essentially uninteresting to people other than those who live there, to Gassin as an *attraction* which tourists come to visit in its own right, to gaze at or to consume through souvenirs and postcards? Medieval villages like Gassin which attract tourists are not unusual in modern France, and even though Gassin is a particularly well-visited site due to its situation on the Peninsula of Saint-Tropez, it is a typical tourist attraction, framed and structured according to particular principles, typical for the transformation of this kind of setting. These structuring principles influence the use and the perception of the setting, transforming it into an *attraction* for the tourist visiting it. For the tourist industry does, to an extraordinary degree, involve the manipulation of symbols and social significance; it is a unique transformer of facts into concepts, and settings into *attractions*. As a complex system of institutions and mechanisms, it produces commodities heavily invested with social meaning, and builds on a tourist behaviour which is profoundly based on consumption of social signs and symbols. For historically, as Böröcz (1992) has argued, the emergence of mass tourism in the early twentieth century was 'organically connected' to the spread of industrial capitalism, and, therefore, is a ‘logical extension of the general principle of industrial capitalism to the realm of leisure’ (ibid.: 736).

Hence, the consumption that tourists undertake on their millions of travels around the globe is, like any other kind of consumption, based on the manipulation of social codes and social signification. It is based on the consumption of signs and symbols informed with social meaning, and therefore influences social life in tourist localities perhaps more than any other kind of industry or type of consumption. As John Urry (1990) has shown, tourists ‘see’ tourist localities in a special way. The manner in which tourists look at and experience tourist locations, the ‘tourist gaze’, is structured by culturally specific notions of what is extraordinary and worth viewing and therefore also what is not. This, in turn, means a similarly particular and systematic organisation of the tourist locality—in our case the village of Gassin. Being arranged, as it is, to satisfy the tourist gaze, it is framed and defined as a particular ‘attraction’. A socially informed signification is being underlined by a system of markers, placing parts of the locality ‘out of real time and place’ (MacCannell 1989:77).

How do these factors interrelate in the creation and recreation of Gassin as an attraction, and what is the ‘something’ that they attribute to certain parts of the physical setting? The attraction Gassin is part of a setting which is attributed particular characteristics by a system of markers. In Gassin, the system of markers which stage certain aspects of the setting as ‘out of real time and place’ and isolates it from the ‘ordinary’ are guide-books, postcards and tourist brochures and leaflets. Such markers give a significant insight into the meaning that is attributed to the setting Gassin in the tourist discourse (Thurot and Thurot 1983), and a closer look at them illustrates the keywords in the signification of the attraction of Gassin. Hence a leaflet with the headline ‘Si *Gassin m’était conté*’ (‘If Gassin was told to me’) reads:

> A rocky promontory, less than four kilometres from the shore, the *ancient village* of Gassin, with its winding alleys and *old picturesque houses* overlooks a landscape of vineyards, wooded stretches and the gulf of St-Tropez. From the *medieval terrace* of the ‘Barri’ (ramparts) the eyes are greeted by a *unique landscape* that stretches from the isles of Hycres to the snowy peaks of the Alps and over the massif of the Mores. An ancient Celto-Ligurian oppidum, the village became a religious fief from the 11th century onwards (Saint Laurent chapel), the imprint of the templars

> and a ` rather *mysterious destiny* caused it to be known as the village of the 'Sorcerers' [emphasis added].

Another leaflet from the municipality reads:

> Gassin, Provençal village sited like an *eagle's nest* secured from illegal intruders and surveying the sublime azure sea, on the *proud* and *noble* port. Sparkling in the night like an airborne vessel: inscribe your long *history in the heart of the dark Mores* [emphasis added].

A third leaflet reads:

> [S]ited on its promontory, this *typical village* offers an exceptional *panoramic view* of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez and the *Country of the Mores* [emphasis added].

These markers, which have been published and distributed by the city council, put an emphasis on particular aspects of the village and of the surrounding scenery: the parasol pine woods and the general view over the sea and mountains. This way of describing the setting objectifies certain ideas and images of a premodern, historical past of the setting, and thus defines it outside everyday, modern time and space, or rather leaves such modern time and space out of the discourse (cf. MacCannell 1989:43–5). It emphasises the difference between the setting Gassin as we find it today, and the attraction Gassin situated somewhere in between a mythical past and now. It defines it into a 'here' and a 'there' (De Certeau 1988:98–9). This framing and definition of the attraction—MacCannell calls it 'sacralisation' (MacCannell 1989:43–4)—as outside the modern, everyday setting is also underlined through more physical markers in the very landscape itself: the circular stone on the village square points out and names different particularities in the horizon—mountains, cities and islands. The gaze of the visitor on the horizon is thus guided by the marker, which defines what is to be looked at and what is not. This framing and definition of the attraction is further underlined by the highlighting of parts of the village and the newly restored village church at night. Last, but not least, several street signs placed in the newly constructed village extension direct visitors away from these new houses and towards the attraction. Merely reading: *'VILLAGE>>'* they show the way to the old village, which again indicates that the actual attraction 'Gassin' does not include modern, everyday houses. The new, modern houses do not fit into the ‘out-of-time-and-space’ attraction ‘Gassin’. In time, they are too recently constructed, and they too clearly make up a part of a contemporary space and social practice not harmonising with the mythical, rural past created in the marker discourse.

The classical anthropological studies of tourism describe problems with differences between a tourist discourse about ‘real local life’ and the locals’ own perceptions of ‘real life’. In Gassin, however, the tourist gaze and the local gaze on the place Gassin is to some extent informed by the same discourse: the attraction to the rural, the crafted and the continuity with the past, and the romanticisation of the Provençal countryside. Large parts of the population originally moved to the area attracted by the same discourse about the setting as the tourist discourse described above. Here, local interests in the management and ‘development’ of the setting Gassin turn out to be as much informed by the tourist discourse as by other, competing conceptualisations. This is highlighted when the logic and values inherent in these particular interests and the view on the objectified cultural characteristics that they represent are challenged—for example, through attempts to actively develop the setting in order to face the effects of tourism and the state of rural transformation which Rogers (1991) simply terms ‘modern times’.

Dealing with tourism and ‘modern times’

One of the important early changes of the physical appearance of the village was a consequence of the change of status of many houses in the 1950s and 1960s. These changed from permanent residences for wine peasants and craftsmen to secondary residences for a new type of inhabitant, first of all interested in the aesthetic aspects of their new habitat. The old, ruin-like houses were thus reconstructed and often almost entirely rebuilt by their new owners. This may have recreated the village as it has to some extent looked at some unfixed time in ‘the past’, but the context for this recreation was of course different: the houses had now changed status from a simple place to live, to make up part of the complex processes of ‘objectified culture’ that are so typical for the touristic focus on places and sites. The efforts continue today and have, in a curious manner, become a socialising factor among the inhabitants of the village, by introducing a strongly contested touristic view on the locality and the use of its space.

The interest in the aesthetic and historical values of the settings is not merely reserved for the secondary residents. The values of the touristic discourses also motivate and guide most other inhabitants in their everyday actions in the setting. In the early 1990s, for example, the twelve members of the city council decided to arrange the physical space of the old village in order to further facilitate visits from ‘cultural tourists’. The small streets between the houses were paved, as was the village square. This square was formerly the gathering point for most social activities in the village, notably the daily *boules* tournaments, arranged on the gravel surface. An immediate effect of the paving of the square and the streets has been, however, that this space is now occupied by the restaurants and the café of the village. Indisputably, the removal of the leisure activities to a newly created, but more peripheral official ‘leisure space’ *(aire de loisirs),* has now meant that only very few inhabitants use the village square or the leisure area, except for a rare game of *boules*. According to one of my older informants, who has lived in the village since the 1950s and now earns a living from renting out rooms to tourists, it is changes like this which have changed the way inhabitants use their setting: ‘things were much better before tourism, we were fine before tourism…. Now there are so many tourists in the streets…before, we used to see each other on the square.’ Her husband adds: ‘Yes, nobody will go down to the leisure area, only perhaps when there is a boules tournament…. Before, when we played boules, we had many people standing around just watching every evening.’ This couple is normally quite closely allied with many of the members of the city council, and are in general sympathetic to several of the smaller changes made to the village to meet the growing demands of the cultural tourists, but in this particular case they are far from agreeing with the mayor’s perception of the village. The paving of the village square has not only interfered with their habit of playing regular games of *boules,* but also interferes with their perception of how the setting Gassin ‘should be’: ‘Well, it takes away the smell of Provence with all that pavement, doesn’t it? I preferred the good old dust in the street, though it is not very practical, it is true!’ The tourist discourse and its particular values are thus very much present as an underlying guide to most inhabitants’ use of their locality, but under different forms in different situations. For although it may seem that the perception of the locality and its staged objectified culture may differ widely from the city council to the most fierce defenders of a total conservation of the old village, it is the values from the powerful touristic staging of the setting which serve as the main motivations for actions to face ‘modern times’ in each individual case.

These attempts to improve the conditions for ‘cultural tourism’ in Gassin by improving the infrastructure of the old village do not stand alone. Another change in the very structure of the village causing heated symbolic debates about the past and the future of the locality has been an attempt by the city council to counteract the fact that a great many of the houses in the village and on the plains have been turned into secondary residences since the early 1960s. This development has meant that the permanent population in the village has been very few in number; in 1993 it was estimated by the city council to be at around 100 inhabitants. As a dramatic attempt to change the situation, the council started constructing an extension of the village in the beginning of 1993, consisting of 200 new houses. These were carried out in the typical ‘rustic’, Provençal style—that is, dominated by light pastel colours and rough outer walls, and the streets have been given Provençal names matching the older street names in the old part of the village. The two parts of the village are connected only by a new, asphalt-covered passage approximately 200 metres long. The new houses in the village extension are reserved for permanent residents who work in the area, and who will therefore stay in the village all year.

This dramatic change in the structure of the village has provoked much debate among inhabitants about the architecture and the aesthetic characteristics of the houses in the village. The architecture of the new houses may well be in accordance with the typical Provençal style, but the appearance of the houses is nevertheless more modern and lacks the rough, rustic stones of the old village. The reaction of a permanent resident in the old village for twenty-five years and originating from Switzerland illustrates the main critique:

> [T]hen they have created this ‘thing’ down there. It’s a true horror…a true horror…it will never be able to give new life to Gassin…up here it ruins the whole characteristic architectural line of this beautiful old village…. In Switzerland they take care not to construct anything in older villages; they leave them in peace like they should here.

The example of course illustrates some of the troubles of ‘making history’ and subsequently having it accepted as ‘actual history’: the houses are modern, and their (re)construction is traceable to particular individuals, and therefore disturbs the continuity with the imagined past

(Boissevain 1992). The many different arguments for and against this brand new part of the setting Gassin are significant for the strategic, political importance of the symbolism of these ‘cultural objectifications’: for the cultural production and reproduction of the setting. Rather than entering into a discussion between different clearly defined development discourses, these arguments illustrate that historical (and cultural) symbols do not ‘emerge’ and do not function in an impersonal way; they are created by particular people in particular contested political processes for particular purposes (Wright 1992:20).

The developmental efforts thus illustrate different perspectives in the population on the use of the physical space of the area in times of rural transformation and the change to tourism. The two perspectives on ‘development’ do not merely signify a controversy between a group of ‘locals’ on one side and the ‘authorities’ on the other, neither do they represent a gap between ‘locals’ on the one side and ‘touristic newcomers’. The highly active city council consists of a broad variety of permanent residents, with just as much fascination for the mythical ‘history that seems to step out of each single stone of the village’ (as one of them told me), and among the members of the council there are as many opinions about how to make the best out of the locality Gassin as there are among the other residents. The development initiatives in Gassin are not initiated from the outside. It is more or less entirely these quite different members of the city council who make the decisions about what to develop and what to preserve. The controversies that the development initiatives have provoked and still provoke among the inhabitants themselves, and among the other inhabitants and the city council, stand, rather, between different worldviews and different approaches and perspectives on how to manage and conceptualise the physical setting Gassin.

Beyond discords between development discourses

The discords about development and the use of the space in Gassin do not, therefore, merely imply a division between a local and a developer’s discourse. They reflect, rather, different perspectives or sentiments about the bounded *place* (as a cultural construction, as opposed to *setting* as a physical, geographical entity) and its history. The initiatives to improve the infrastructure of cultural tourism are criticised by permanent inhabitants of the village as well as secondary residents for spoiling the ‘face’ of the village, and destroying the ‘soul’ and the ‘aesthetic’ aspects of the village. The paving of the village square and the small streets and the recent construction of an open-air leisure area interferes with the image of the village as premodern and historical that many inhabitants have adopted. The initiative of constructing an extension of the old village, doubling the size of the village, is met with similar protests. These new houses, although designed by a locally well-known architect in a style aimed at fitting with the older, ‘typical’ Provençal houses, challenge by their mere presence the image of the aesthetic village, reconstructed by the secondary residents in the 1960s and supported and situated out of modern time and everyday place by the tourist discourse.

The council has had increasing problems with the complexities of legitimisation of such invented historical links and invented continuity with ‘the past’. In order to overcome such problems of legitimacy, and to face the many often highly emotional suggestions of preserving the autonomy and the ‘peace’ of the old village, the council has published, as yet another initiative, a history book on the development of the municipality through the years. With the help of old local photos and documents dating back to the beginning of this century—in what many informants qualify as the *‘authentic’* and *‘rustic’* time before tourism—the city council and the author of the book attempt to create a continuity between ‘the past’ in the area and the newest creations. Even though such ‘history-makings’ often are quite efficient in creating a sense of continuity with the past and a symbolic basis for a sense of belonging (Cohen 1985:98–103), this particular ‘history-making’ has, however, been largely contested and partly rejected. It is rejected as too political and is closely associated with the individual personalities behind the recent constructions in the village. This attempt at placing the Gassin of today in a historical, logical continuity is too obviously time-bound and man-made: it has been produced by particular individuals with particular backgrounds in the setting and for particular purposes. In this social landscape of social agents with different social and geographical backgrounds, where only few can claim, and do claim, to have any actual close relation with the history of the setting Gassin, such examples of localised ‘history-making’ thus play an important role in negotiations of social relations and positions. Contradicting or doubting this representation of the past of Gassin simultaneously represents and constitutes the social relations and positions of its narrators and those commenting on their narratives (cf. Kavouras 1994:140). Similarly, therefore, when inhabitants comment on the extension of the village and another project of constructing an international golf course in the middle of the parasol pine woods, they simultaneously relate to and comment on the groups of people associated with the initial decision to construct, and thereby furthermore comment on their own position in relation to these individuals. The contest over development issues thus first of all becomes a contest over social identities, an indirect negotiation of a local 'Who's Who', mapping out not only geographical backgrounds, but also sociocultural backgrounds.

An illustration of how the discussion of development issues can represent an important battlefield between different worldviews and sociocultural backgrounds is one of the more well-organised responses to the council's development efforts: a conservation movement, concerned with the *'protection of the environment and sites'* in Gassin. This association argues for a slow, careful preservation or (re)creation of the aesthetic and 'authentic' parts of the area, and opposes most modernising initiatives in the village in general. It counts many highly educated secondary residents and semi-permanent inhabitants among its members, and it protests and tries to gain influence on the development processes through the official, legal channels by using protective legislation to underline their view on the 'authentic' and 'aesthetic', to fight the present mayor and his council, and the *'Italian Mafia'* and to *'protect all the beautiful small places which are left in our little village',* as a member specifies. These quite successful legal manoeuvres from the conservation association therefore do not merely reflect a concern with the patrimony in Gassin, they also entail a negotiation of social identities in a fragmented social landscape among inhabitants with rather different social backgrounds, and therefore often rather different cultural backgrounds—different *habita* (Bourdieu 1979). Hence, members tend to point to the (often distant) Italian origins of some of the councillors around the mayor, and argue that the village extension is the work of the *'local Italian Mafia'* and the *'Italian labourers'* forming around the mayor who, it is argued, want to *'destroy our beautiful little village'*.

The negotiation of 'cultural taste' or 'cultural preferences' is, as Bourdieu (1979, 1994) has shown in his detailed studies of contemporary French culture, a central factor in the negotiation of and constant recreation of cultural and social identities. Such distinction between different manifested cultural preferences is a strong element in social interaction in French culture, and shows itself in different types of consumption in everyday life, and, as in Gassin, between preferences for the protection or the modernisation of objectified culture. Depending on their social and cultural backgrounds and, of course, their individual judgements, inhabitants may find the preservation of the 'authentic Gassin' very natural, or they may find it natural to continue to create new constructions in Gassin. Their cultural preferences reflect very fundamental perspectives on the world, and are perceived of as perfectly 'natural', beyond any need for discussion (1979:73). When inhabitants thus comment on the construction of the village extension, they comment on the initiators behind the project and on the cultural perspective that *they* represent and communicate by creating the extension, and furthermore comment on their own position in relation to this perspective, and reaffirm or reinforce this distinction in the social field between them.

Local development triggering 'rurban' social identities

Hence, although Gassin in many ways is a complex setting with a heterogeneous population ranging from unskilled former wine peasants to highly educated aristocrats, and only very few inhabitants have lived in the area for more than a few decades, this developmental interference with history initiates debates which at first hand have to do with attitudes towards cultural modernisation and preservation, but which become symbolic issues where social identities and worldviews are negotiated. The criticism or defence of development projects in Gassin must therefore necessarily be understood as a negotiation of social identities, those of others as well as that of oneself, in a confusing social landscape where social relations are not based on production relations and shared cultural perspectives as in classical rural settings.

Not only in rural studies, but also in more general studies of the 'footloose' nature of culture today (Hannerz 1992:5) it is increasingly argued that social relations, even outside the urban spheres, have become modernised and complex. Cultural influences and the limits of our imagination and social motivation have become more and more deterritorialised and so have social relations to a certain extent. In Gassin, social relations and cultural worlds are complex and deterritorialised at the same time as the rigid rural frames and highly localised symbolism remain and are further enhanced by tourism. Social life in Gassin may be urbanised and in a sense even deterritorialised, but much of the physical structure of this corner of rural France is still there, as well as a good deal of romantic symbolism inherent in the tourism discourse. In this partly 'rural' and partly 'urban' (Bauer and Roux (1976) have used the term *'rurbain'* for this new type of social contract within rural frames) social landscape, social relations are dispersed and, according to some inhabitants, even disappearing. But the different developmental initiatives which primarily have been taken by the city council to fight a threatening decrease in the number of permanent inhabitants, and to sustain the main economical basis in the region: cultural tourism, have sparked many debates and have served as social arenas for negotiations and battles between different worldviews. The initiatives are used by inhabitants in Gassin as fix-points and symbols for negotiation of social identities, and provoke an enhanced interest in the 'place' and the characteristics of the locality they live in.

Concluding questions

The concept 'development' has been discussed here only in a very indirect manner, and has been attributed with various layers of meaning. I have tried to illustrate that the term should be used with great care and attention, and that we should avoid premature conclusions about 'development' always signifying a change imposed by one group of people on another group. We should consider the various contextual forms of development in order to avoid a too simplified analysis and interpretation. It seems useful to remember the point made by Crick (1989) about the study of the social effects of tourism: they are rarely convincingly distinguished from those of other contemporary forces for social change (ibid.: 335). The same goes for the study of development situations. One factor to consider in the case of Gassin has been the general socio-economic evolution meaning decomposition and dramatic change in the rural existence of the setting. Following the depopulation of the area and the simultaneous new immigration of various social groups, other types of more planned development of the area have been attempted. This is done by the many new secondary residents, who initiated the change of the area from a 'ruin' to a tourist attraction heavily invested with social significance—a significance which harks back to an imagined unfixed period of rural ease and peasant conservatism. Despite the near absence of face-to-face interaction between the inhabitants in this tourist location, a number of additional planning efforts to develop the physical frames in the village in different directions under the pressure of this touristic social significance have created a veritable battleground of social negotiation and a renewed awareness and interest in and positioning of next-door neighbours. Appadurai has recently noted that little detailed ethnography exists from locations where the mechanisms of the tourist industry and of the modernisation of social relations merge and create new social forms, but that ‘what little we do know suggests that many such locations create complex conditions for the production and reproduction of locality’ (1995:216). I have tried to show that Gassin is a fine example of how ‘new social forms’ may emerge out of the complex interaction of ‘modern times’, a socially influential factor such as tourism, and local development. And furthermore, that it is exactly around this theme—the production and reproduction of locality—that the new social interaction evolves.

This, of course, seems to suggest that what may seem to be a one-way evolution, of a locality into a modern social void merely receiving endless numbers of tourists, can well develop very differently when relatively drastic planning efforts are taken and are combined with the powerful image-creating tourist industry. Still, this article should be seen as no optimist argument along the lines that, when involved with tourism and local development ‘culture will always find new ways’ in modernised rural locations. I would have liked to conclude, along the lines of Waldren (1997) from her strikingly similar study from Mallorca in Spain, that it is exactly these contests between different worldviews and different social backgrounds which help maintain a well-balanced village identity, constantly negotiated between insiders and outsiders, between dynamic definitions of ‘locals’ and ‘visitors’, and ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. But it seems to me to be a crucial point of my observations here, that the development initiatives combined with the impact of the tourist gaze have triggered a particular type of social interaction and a *reterritorialisation* of cultural and social worlds that is contested by many inhabitants in Gassin. To them, the village is to be considered socially dead when no locals turn up to the annual village feast and when the streets are left empty even outside the tourist season. In the anthropological analysis, Gassin is no ‘empty meeting ground’, but its inhabitants nevertheless still complain that their modern lives with tourism are sad and isolated. During my fieldwork, the dramatic image of a collapsed social life was frequently evoked by my informants in outbursts such as: *‘You want to investigate social life in Gassin? What social life? There is no social life.’* and *‘Gassin is a dead village, you see. There is no social life here in this village after tourism.’* It may well be, as Pedregal (1996) notes in another similar case study from northern Spain, that such complaints of a lack of sociability can hide a complex construction and reconstruction of social identities among the permanent population, driven by the intensified self-consciousness that the tourist gaze has provoked (ibid.: 79), but we should be very much aware of local complaints such as those I have met in Gassin, in order not to ignore what this new modern social form is actually all about for its actors.

Finally, the path of tourism is a risky one for Gassin, as for all other small settings. Like any other tourist locality, Gassin depends on a continued interest from tourists in the 'rural', 'historical' signification that Gassin represents, and not least on the important number of visitors attracted to the peninsula by the extravagant neighbour, Saint-Tropez. The carefully balanced attempts from the local council to support, on the one hand, and even expand the infrastructure for tourist visits, and on the other, create brand new houses to attract more permanent young residents may, in the long run, turn out to be a success. Perhaps in ten years from now the new and the old parts of the village will have become wholly integrated and accepted despite the debate they have caused, and perhaps in ten years' time my friends in Gassin will tell me how good it is to live in this particular, romantic village. But on the other hand, other things may have changed, beyond the control of the Gassinois.

Notes

1 The issues in this article have been discussed further in my Cand. Scient. Anth. thesis (Lindknud 1996).

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Index

aboriginal peoples, Malaysia 30
Abram, Simone 1–16
action, social 5
action, direct: and environmentalism 1–2, 8, 10, 101–2; and Maltese development 101–2, 105–6, 108–11, 114; and opposition to Esera dam schemes 75–6, 78–81; and opposition to road construction 134, 137, 139 n.8
adat (Malay customs) 29–30
agriculture: and dam-building 76, 77; and flight from the land 132, 141, 155; Mallorca 126, 132; and modernisation 141; and organic farming 10; Upper Kolpa valley 57–8, 61
'agri-tourism' 123, 124, 126
AIDS epidemic, and female bar workers 39–40, 49, 52, 52 n.1
Alternattiva Demokratika (Democratic Alternative; Malta) 102–3, 108–9, 112
Anderson, Benedict 69
anthropology: and development 1–5, 14–16; of public affairs 91, 93
Appadurai, A. 155–6
Aragon region, and dam-building projects 75–93
Arce, A. 6
architecture, and development 150, 152
argumentative detour 11, 14–15, 80–2, 93 n.6
attraction, tourist 142, 144, 145–8, 155
authority, male, in East Africa 37, 52
Aznar, José María 123, 134
Balearic Islands, and politics of development 15, 120–38
bar workers, female: and division of labour 43; ethnic origins 40–1; and families 41; and HIV prevalence 39–40, 52 n.1; income 36, 43–5, 48; and mobility 14, 39, 41–3; number of sexual partners 45; and 'safe sex' 49, 51; and sex 36–7, 39, 44–50; social characteristics 40
bar workers, male 40; and division of labour 43
Barth, Fredrik 70
Beck, Ulrich 90
Bergua, José Angel 2, 9, 11, 12, 14–15, 75–93
biologism, and development discourse 89
body, female, materiality 36, 47, 48, 50–2
Boissevain, Jeremy 9, 12, 15, 96–115
borders, Croatian-Slovenian 2, 14, 55–71; bureaucratic perceptions of 62, 70–1; cross-border contacts 64–8, 70; establishing 60–2, 70; ethnic 59–60, 70; local perceptions of 62–71
Böröcz, J. 145–6
Bourdieu, P. 153
Brent Spar incident 9
building development, in Malta 96–7, 99–100, 102
bureaucracy, development 3–4, 7, 13; Balearic and Spanish 129–30;and opposition movements 80–8; and risk perception 91

Campo village, and opposition to dam-building 79
Cañellas, Gabriel 131, 134, 139 n.7
Cañellismo 134, 139 n.7
capitalism:
consumer 5, 10–11;
industrial 12, 145–6; state 10
change: as open-ended 18, 20; as organic growth 18, 19
Chinese, in Malaysia 20
citizenship, and identity 68–9
civil society: and development 4–6, 9–12; Mallorca 126–9; Malta 114
climate, and tourism 124
clothing, and modernity 37–8, 47, 50
Cohen, A.P. 69
collectivism, and human rights 31
colonisation, and development 4
communications: globalisation 9, 113, 122; in Upper Kolpa valley 57, 60–1, 70, 71
community, and individual 31, 37, 81, 93–4 n.7, 122
compensation, and development 81–2, 86–8, 117 n.10
Confederación Hidrográfica del Ebro see Ebro Basin Water Authority
conflict, and development 2, 4, 7
Consejo del Agua (Water Council), Spain 82, 94 n.8
Conservative party, UK 11–12
construction industry, and planning 99
consumption, commodified 14, 37
control: by men 37, 52; by state 5–9, 12
corruption, Mallorca 121, 133–5, 138
Crick, M. 155
Croatia: and border with Slovenia 2, 14, 55–71; and language 59–60
culturalism: and argumentative detour 11, 14–15, 80–2, 93 n.6; and bureaucracy 83–4; and economism 15, 78–84, 114, 137
culture: and change 18–20; consumption 142; and economy 15; and identity 137; and nature 34 n.18; and progress 18–19, 132; and risk construction 78, 79–80, 85, 88; and tourism 124, 126, 145–51, 153, 155–6; and tradition 29–30, 38

dam building: opposition to 75–93; and risk perceptions 79–84, 85
deforestation, Malaysia 30
delinquency, juvenile, as result of development 31
democracy: and democratisation of risk 91; and development 5, 9, 11–13, 14, 85, 94 n.10, 120–2, 134; representative 11, 129–31, 135; and risk perception 80–4
development: and anthropology 1–5, 14–16; building *see* building development; as concept 18–19; discourses *see* discourses of development; economic *see* economic policy; economy; tourism; and environment 1–2, 8,9–11, 123–4; human 24, 31; meanings 14, 18–33, 100–1; as metaphor 4, 19–20; and misuse of funding 133–4; negotiation 84–90; and over-development 23, 24; participative 2, 4–5, 6, 14, 121; physical 23–4, 30–3; as politics 2, 4, 5–9, 13–14, 120–38; rural 21, 27–8, 31–3, , 141–57; social impact 15, 75–6, 77–9, 87–8, 90–2, 110; sustainable 10–11, 127; 'Third World' 12, 19–20
Development Control Commission 100
Development Planning Act (1992; Malta) 99, 118 n.16
Din l-Art Helwa (National Trust, Malta) 101, 105, 112
discourses of development 3–5, 6–8, 10–11; and culture and economy 15, 79–80, 88–9; and democracy 11–12, 121; in France 141–57; in Malaysia 14, 31–2; in Mallorca 135–6; in Malta 114, 118 n.15; and opposition 79–80; in Spain 79–80, 88–9, 122; technical 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 81–3; 'Western' 1, 18–19
discourses of tourism 15, 144, 146–9, 152
diversification, and tourism 98–9
Doorman, F. 5, 6
Douglas, Mary 92
dualism, and attitudes to development 27–8, 32, 34 n.18

EASA (European Association of Social Anthropologists), Barcelona Conference ix
Ebro Basin Water Authority 76, 77, 83, 88, 94 n.8

economic policy, Malaysia 20–3, 30
economism: and culturalism 15, 78–84, 114, 137; and space 78–82, 96
economy and culture 15; growth and development 9, 14, 20–3, 34 n.15, 84–5, 113; and tourism 2, 96; and Upper Kolpa valley 57–9, 60, 71
education, female, and independence 42
Els Verds (Green Party, Mallorca) 127, 130
emotion: and economism 114; and risk perception 78–80, 84, 89
employment, and tourism 128–9
England and Wales, land-use planning 7–8
environment: and democracy 11–12; and development 1–2, 8, 89, 113–14, 123–4, 127–8; impact assessment 78, 100, 103–5, 107, 110, 116–17 n.10, 136; and modernisation 9–11; and NGOs 96, 101–3, 104–14; and over-development 23; protection 99, 121; and tourism 97, 99, 101–3, 121, 123, 128–9, 136; *see also deforestation;* jungle clearance
Environment Protection Act (1991; Malta) 99
Environment Protection Department (EPD), Malta 104
Environmental Management Unit, Malta 108, 116–17 n.10
epistemology: and environmentalism 9–10; and planning 4, 6; *see also culturalism;* economism
Escobar, A. 3, 4–5, 12
Esera River: and Comunet project 76–8, 81, 83; Development Plan 88; and Lorenzo Pardo Project 75–6, 93 n.4; Santaliestra project 77–90
ethnic cleansing, World War II 58
ethnicity, and identity 59–60
ethnocentricity, and meaning of development 18
ethnography: and risk perception 91, 93; and tourism 155–6
European Union: and Mallorca 131, 135; and Malta 99, 103; and planning 99; and Spain 87, 122, 138 n.3

Fairmile Five 139 n.8
fieldwork: and Esera River dam project 77–84; Upper Kolpa valley 62–4
Fischer, F. 93 n.6
Fondation de les Illes Balears 130, 133–4
Forester, J. 93 n.6
France, and opposition to development 13, 141–57
Franco, Francesco: and the environment 123–4; and politics 121–2; and tourism 120
freedom: and female bar workers, Tanzania 14, 36–7, 42–3; and sexuality 45–6, 50
Friends of the Earth 9, 107
Front Kontra l-Hilton (FKH; Malta) 108–11, 114
fundamentalism, religious 32

Galizia, Caruana 98
Gardner, K. 1
Gassin, Southern France: conservation movement 153; and development discourses 151–4; and objectified culture 145–8; and social change 142–5; and social identities 15, 153, 154–5; tourism and modernisation 148–51, 153
gaze, tourist 98, 142, 146–8, 156–7
globalisation, and risk perception 91
GOB (Ornithologists Group of the Balearics) 127, 130
governance, local: and anthropology ix, 3; and democracy 11–13, 122, 129–31; and development 1–2, 121
Graffiti, Malta 105, 106, 108–9, 112
Gramsci, A. 137
Green politics *see* politics, Green
Greenpeace 9
Grillo, R.D. 69
Grove-White, Robin 96

Habermas, J. 93 n.6
hawara relationships, Tanzania 46–7, 48–9
heritage, and tourism 15, 122, 124, 126–7, 130, 132, 137
Hilton Hotel project, Malta 103–13
HIV, and female bar workers in Tanzania 39–40, 52 n.1
Hopewell, J. 123–4
housing: and land-use planning 7–8; in Malaysia 23, 24, 26; in Mallorca

123; in Southern France 150, 157; and transport 10–11; in UK 1, 7
human rights: and development 9, 12; Malaysia 30–1
hydroelectricity, and dam construction 86–7

identities: conflicting 8–9; cultural 113, 118 n.14, 137, 153; and cultural spaces 79, 84, 85, 93 n.3; and development 2, 4, 32–3, 124, 130; local 70, 135, 142; and modernity 14, 37, 51–2, 132, 155–7; national 14, 15, 59, 63, 65–9; negotiation 137, 142, 154–6; social 153, 154–5; and tradition 29–30
ideology, 'Western', and development 3–5, 10
income: and development 21, 25; female bar workers 36, 43–5, 48; and tourism 128–30
independence, for Tanzanian women 36–7, 42–3
individual, and community 31, 37, 81, 85, 93–4 n.7, 122
individualism, and modernity 36, 50, 52
industrialisation: Malaysia 21; Spain 120
infrastructure projects: and economy 2; France 150, 151–2, 157; Malaysia 23, 26; Mallorca 15, 120, 125, 126–7, 136; Spain 87; and tourism 98, 120, 125, 150, 151–2, 157
interview: Esera River research 78; Upper Kolpa valley research 64
investment, direct foreign 130, 131–2
irrigation projects, in Spain 75, 81–2, 85–7
Islam, in Malaysia 29–30
Izquierda Unita (United Left; Mallorca) 130

jungle, attitudes to 14, 27–8, 32
jungle clearance, Malaysia 23–5, 27–8, 31

kampung, Malay 25, 27–8
Kenya: and development 2; and Tanzanian bar workers 38
Kneževc, Duska 14, 55–71
knowledge *see* epistemology

Labour Party, Malta 101–3, 105, 109–10, 112, 118 n.16
land-use planning 7–8, 127
landscape, social 137, 142, 152–3, 154–5
language: and identity 124; Malay 26; and nationality 59–60, 63, 65, 67, 69–70, 72 n.5
Larsen, Anne Kathrine 10, 14
leisure: and industrial capitalism 145–6; and sex 51; and shortage of space 114–15; and urban life 43, 44, 48, 50; *see also tourism*
Lewis, D. 1
Lindknud, Christian 9, 15, 141–57
locality: and identity 14, 15, 63–4, 70, 156; and risk perception 77–84, 85, 127; and tourist gaze 146, 149–50
Long, N. 6
Lorenzo Pardo Project, Spain 75–6, 93 n.4
loyalty: linguistic 63; local 14, 63, 70; national 14, 63, 69, 70–1

Maasai: and development 47–8, 50; and female bar workers 45, 50, 51; and HIV-transmission 52 n.1; and Namanga village 38, 40; and tourism 2
MacCannell, D. 142, 147
Mairal Buil, Gaspar 2, 9, 11, 12, 14–15, 75–93
Malays: and economic development 20–3, 24; and over-development 23; view of development 25–31
Malaysia: development efforts 23–5; and environment 23; and meanings of development 2, 14, 20–33; New Economic Policy 20; and prestige projects 21–2; and scepticism about development 31–2; and tourism 27; and villagers' views of development 25–31
Mallorca: and citizens' concerns 126–9; and environment 121; and heritage 122, 124, 126–7, 130, 132, 137; and infrastructure development 15, 120; and politics 121–2; and representative democracy 129–31; and tourism development 122, 123–6, 131–5
Malta: environmental lobby 101–15; and Hilton Hotel 103–12; planning

procedure 99–101; tourism 15, 96–9
maps, cognitive 24–5, 32
Martinez, P. 127
Mdina, Malta, and tourism 98
memory, collective 79–80, 84, 94 n.10
Mendras, Henri 141–2
Menorca, and development and heritage 130
Mererani village, Tanzania 46, 52–3 n.4
metaphors, of opposition 80
migration: from urban centres 144, 155; to urban centres 58, 132, 141–2, 144, 155; and tourism 132
Miller, D. 38
Milton, K. 118 n.15
Mintoff, Dom 102
mobility, and female bar workers 14, 39, 41–3
modernisation: and culture 132, 154; and environment 9–11, 125, 137; opposition to 152–3; rural 21, 141–3, 145, 149–51, 153–4; and social structures 141–2; and tourism 120, 156
modernity: and development 5, 15, 37–8, 129, 130, 132; and female bar workers, Tanzania 14, 36–52
Mohamad, Mahathir bin, and development aims 21, 22–3
money, and sex 36, 39, 45–50, 51
Montero, Rosa 120, 122
Moviment ghall-Ambjent (Movement for the Environment, Malta) 101, 102,106,108, 112

Namanga village, Tanzania: and commercial sex 45–50; and cross-border trade 38–9, 41; and female bar workers 36–7, 39–42, 43–50; and HIV prevalence 39–40
nation-state: and identity 14, 63; and language 59–60, 63, 65, 67, 69–70, 72 n.5; and loyalty 14, 69, 70–1
National Hydrological Plan, Spain 87, 89
Nationalist Party, Malta 99, 102–3, 106,110,112
Natural History Society of the Balearic Islands 138 n.4
nature, and culture 34 n.18
Newman, P. 13
newspapers, and development conflicts 121
NGOs *see* non-governmental organisations
Nisbet, R.A. 19
non-governmental organisations: Mallorca 124–5, 138–9 n.4; Malta 96, 100, 101–3, 104–14

Ombudsman, Malta 109–10, 114

Pacto del Agua (Water Agreement) 87
participation: and democracy 11, 121; and development 2, 4–9, 13, 14
party politics: and development 124–5, 127, 130, 133–4, 135; and local activism 9, 11, 76, 106–10; and planning 101–3, 112
past: and modernity 38, 47, 150–1, 155, 157; and perceptions of state borders 70; and risk perception 79–80; in tourism discourse 141, 144, 146–8, 152
Pearce, A. 10, 113
peasantry, ‘end’ 141–2
Pedregal, A.M.N. 156
place, as cultural construction 85, 151–2
Plan Hidrológico Nacional (National Hydrological Plan), Spain 87, 89
planning: collaborative 7, 13; economic 20–3, 30; as institution 3–4; in Malaysia 20, 23–4; in Mallorca 127; in Malta 96–7, 99–101, 112–13; participative 13; and politics 12–13; and protest 1–2; social 5; transport 127; see also *land-use planning;* structure plan
Planning Area Permits Board (PAPB; Malta) 97, 103
Planning Authority, Malta 99–100, 103–12, 114, 118 n.16
police, and direct action 109–10
politics: and anthropology 15–16; and development 2, 4, 5–9, 13–14, 120–38; Green 9, 102, 103, 127, 130; Malaysia 23–4, 25; Mallorca 124–5, 127, 129–35, 137–8; Malta 99, 101–3, 107–10, 112, 114; Spain 75–7, 80, 120–2; and state borders 55–7, 59, 60–2
pollution, and development 105, 107, 116–17 n.10

Popular Party, Mallorca 124–5, 130, 133–4
poverty: East Africa 43; rural, Malaysia 20–1, 25
power: and development 3–6, 15, 121, 130–1; and risk perception 90
Prato, G.B. 10, 12
preference, cultural 153–5
presents, and sexual services 48
pressure groups: and environmentalism 2, 8, 9; *see also non-governmental organisations*
privatisation, and local development 87–8
progress, and development 18–19, 127–8
projects: opposition to *see* action, direct, dam building; and risk potential 79
prostitution: and bar work 36–7, 45, 49–50, 51; and household economy 41
protest: and democracy 11–12; environmental 9–10; and planning 1–2, 13–14; see also *action, direct*
Pulau Tuba, Malaysia, attitudes to development 26–7, 28–30, 31

quality of life 23, 31–2; and increased tourism 98, 101, 127, 132
questionnaire, survey 63–6

Rabo, A. 33 n.2
rainforest, felling 30
rationality: and culturalism 80–1; development 3, 6, 11, 12,14
regions: regional development, Malaysia 21, 23–4; regional government, Spain 122
research: on border perceptions 62–8; and risk perceptions 77–84
resistances: local 11–13, 27; to male power 49
resources: and growth of tourism 98–9, 115, 121, 129; protection 9,14, 23; and sustainable development 10
revivalism, religious 32
risk: construction 78–93; and culture 78, 79; democratisation 91; situations of 92–3
Risk Perception Shadow (RPS) 77
risk society 90
road building: and direct action 11–12; in Malaysia 23, 24; in Mallorca 15, 121, 123, 125, 127-8, 130-1, 132-7;in Southern France 143; in UK 1, 139 n.8; in Upper Kolpa valley 57, 60–1, 71
Robertson, A.F. 3–4, 6, 11, 20, 34 n.15
Rogers, S.C. 148
romance, and commercialised sex 51
Rural Conservation Areas, Malta 99–100

Saint-Tropez, and tourism 143–4, 157
Schumacher, E.F. 9
Selznick, P. 4
sentiments: and development 2,4, 8–9, 14, 135; and environmentalism 9; and risk perception 78–80, 84, 89
service sector, Mallorca 131–5
sex: and female bar workers 36–7, 39, 44–50; forced 45–6; for leisure 51; and money 36, 39, 45–50, 51; 'safe' 49, 51; and transmission of HIV 39–40, 52 n.1
Shamsul, A.B. 33 n.9
Slovenia: and border with Croatia 2, 14, 55–71; and language 59–60
Socialist party, Spain, and Esera River projects 76
Socialist Youths (Malta) 102
society: and change 18–20; and progress 18–19
Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature (SSCN; Malta) 101, 105, 114
Soler 139 n.7
solidarity, territorial 82
Southall, Aidan 43
space: contested 96–115; cultural 79–82, 85, 93 n.3, 148–52; and economism 78–81, 85, 96; political 80
Spain: and construction of risk 75–93; and development conflict 2, 15; industrialisation 120; and politics 75–7, 80, 120, 121–2; and tourism 120; *see also Balearic Islands;* Mallorca
state: and borders 2, 60–2; and citizenship 68–9; and democracy 11–13, 14; and economic growth 9, 14; and language 59–60, 63, 65, 67, 69–70, 72 n.5; and local development 1, 4–5, 6, 11, 84–5;

and local perceptions of risk 80–1, 85, 88–90, 92; and participation 5–9; *see also nation-state*
structure plan, Malta 96–7, 99–100, 103, 104, 110, 113, 116–17 n.10
sustainability 10–11, 127

Talle, Aud 10, 14, 36–52
Tanzania: female bar workers 14, 36–52; hawara *relationships 46–7, 48–9;* and meaning of development 37–8
taste, cultural 153–5
Theuma, Nadia 9, 12, 15, 96–115
Third World: and development 1, 12, 19–20; *see also Malaysia;* Tanzania
tips, and female bar workers 44
Tolstoy, Nicholas 72 n.4
tourism: ‘agri-tourism’ 123, 124, 126; and development 2, 105–7, 136; and environment 97, 99, 101–3, 121, 128–9; in France 141–57; and heritage 15, 122, 124, 126–7, 130, 132, 137; in Malaysia 27; in Mallorca 122, 123–35; in Malta 15, 96–9, 113, 114–15; mass 98, 120, 124, 129, 144, 145–6; and modernisation 120, 142, 148–51; and objectified culture 145–8, 149–51, 153, 155; ‘quality’ 98–9, 103–8, 115, 124, 129; rural 123–4, 125–6, 142; social effects 15, 141–5, 146, 154–6; in Spain 120; and tourist gaze 98, 142, 146, 147–8, 156–7; *see also attraction;* infrastructure projects; transport
trade: cross-border 38–9, 41, 49, 61; and female bar workers 41, 44; in Upper Kolpa valley 58, 61
tradition: and allegiance 121–2, 125; and development 29–30, 94 n.10; and modernity 38, 47, 51, 130, 132, 156
transport, and tourism 97–8, 120, 123, 127–8, 132, 134–5

Ucelay Da Cal, E. 128
UK: and collaborative planning 13; and direct action 8–9, 11–12; and sustainable development 10–11
underdevelopment 19–20
Union Mallorquin Party (UM) 130
United States, and development 19
Upper Kolpa valley: cross-border contacts 64–8, 70; as ethnic border 59–60; fieldwork 62–4; history 55–60, 63; and language 59–60, 63, 65, 67, 69–70, 72 n.5; map 56; research results 64–8; and Slovene-Croat state border 55–71
Urban Conservation Areas, Malta 99
urban development 23–4
Urry, John 143, 146
Uskoki migrants 55

values, local; and development 30–1, 32, 38, 51, 84–5, 132; male 44; and tourism 132
vineyards, modernisation 143
De Vries, P. 4

Waldren, Jacqueline 9, 12, 15, 120–38, 156
water: irrigation and dam-building 75–93; and tourism 129
White, L. 41
women; and attraction of towns 42–3; bar workers, Tanzania 14, 36–52; and cross-border trade 38–9, 41, 43–4, 49; as mistresses 46–8; as property-holders 131–2
Wright, S. 3

Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent (Youths for the Environment; Malta) 101–2