

Ecotourism in Post-Conflict: A New Tool for Reconciliation?

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Abstract

The trans-boundary nature of environmental problems and the increased incentive for cooperation over natural resources have given rise to a significant body of literature. Much of this research has also focused on the relatively new phenomenon of Peace Parks as a marriage of conservation and conflict resolution. Peace Parks, while generally touted as successful, tend to view one variable as secondary that most conflict scholars view as a central causality: the role of poverty in conflict and environmental degradation. Ecotourism, which is considered the marriage of development and conservation, may serve as an economic component that can strengthen the cooperative and peace-building effect of conservation efforts. This paper lays out three hypotheses regarding how ecotourism can build cooperation among formerly conflicting groups. The case study of the Mountain Gorillas and ecotourism collaboration in the Virunga-Bwindi region of Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo illustrates where collaboration in ecotourism between former warring parties is contributing to the success of gorilla conservation, development, and the foundations for sustainable peace.

I. Introduction

Ecotourism has steadily credibility among both the international economic development and the international conservation sectors. The Ecotourism Society in 1991 defined ecotourism as, “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people”.¹ This definition has been accepted by such organizations as Conservation International and the United Nations Environment Program. Ecotourism bridges the gap between economic development and environmental preservation, by creating economic incentives for environmental conservation through tourism. Ecotourism has become a very effective policy tool for reducing poverty and stemming natural resource degradation and biodiversity loss.² Some stats here- also, estimates of growth in ecotourism- revenue in 1995 and today for example?

In addition to providing a means of protecting important ecological areas and generating revenue for local peoples, Ecotourism may also serve another important function: to reduce the impetus for conflict and build stable cooperative relationships among rival groups.

This paper proposes that ecotourism be added to the burgeoning field of environmental peacemaking. Many scholars have viewed the environment as a source of conflict, positing that resource scarcity and environmental degradation can lead to violent competition³. Environmental peacemaking theorists propose an alternative theory, that the mutual challenge and trans-boundary nature of environmental problems creates scenarios in which cooperation is more beneficial than conflict. As Ken Conca writes in his seminal paper, “The Case for Environmental Peacemaking”, “Overlapping

¹ www.ecotour.org, Accessed: 2/16/07

² UNEP. “About Ecotourism”. <http://www.unep.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism/home.htm>, Accessed: 2/17/07

³ Homer-Dixon, Thomas. “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict”. *International Security*. 1994. 19(1): pp: 5-40.

ecosystemic interdependencies might provide a chance to create opportunities for shared gains and establish a tradition of cooperation.”⁴

Specifically, ecotourism can build cooperative relationships in three distinct ways:

- 1) Ecotourism creates unique, mutually beneficial economic incentives for cooperation and nature conservation.
- 2) Shared natural heritage can be a strong motivator for cooperation and trust building, as can shared management and work experience.
- 3) Ecotourism may be particularly amenable to grass roots cooperation efforts that circumvent top-down, bureaucratic impasses, which can lead to positive spillover effects in other areas.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section II discusses how the current environmental peacemaking and “Peace Park” literature fails to adequately address the economic factors that hamper post-conflict reconciliation and trust building, Section III outlines the theory of how ecotourism can assist in post-conflict reconciliation, Section IV provides a case study by examining the role of ecotourism in the gorilla conservation efforts of the Virunga-Bwindi region between Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Section V explains how this analysis can be applied to other post-conflict situations such as the Kashmir, the Balkans, and the Ethiopian-Eritrean recovery, and Section VI presents the conclusions.

II. Literature Review

Environmental security is a relatively new area within the field of international relations. The field has been dominated by the liberal vs. realist theories of the causes of conflict and the factors that prolong them. Only recently have scholars started to extend the field

⁴ Conca, Ken “The Case for Environmental Peace-Making”. Ch. 1 in Conca and Dabelko, eds.

of conflict studies into new areas. Early work, like that of Johan Galtung⁵, began examining the link between resource issues and conflict. Others such as Thomas Homer-Dixon⁶ and Nils Petter Gleditsch looked at the role of population growth and scarcity as impetuses of conflict. Ken Conca disputes this claim, contending that “environmental problems also create incentives for cooperation and collective action⁷”. His work provided the impetus for the larger discourse surrounding environmental peacemaking. Similar to ecotourism, environmental peacemaking is also loosely defined. Geoffrey Dabelko posits that there are four phases in which environmental peacemaking can be transformative⁸:

- 1) The environment as conflict prevention,
- 2) The environment as a lifeline in times of conflict
- 3) The environment as an essential ingredient to peace agreement,
- 4) The environment as post-conflict trust builder.

This last area, the environment as a post-conflict trust builder, has spawned a significant sub-body of initiatives and literature surrounding the creation of Peace Parks, which are trans-border protected areas that intend to build cooperation through mutual management of protected areas⁹. Much of the literature on these parks concentrates on the management of conflict and conservation, with the economics of the park and ecotourism only addressed peripherally. The role of economic resources and beneficiaries are not

⁵ Galtung, Johan. *Environment, Development and Military Activity: Towards Alternative Military Doctrines*. 1982. Oslo: Norwegian Univ. Press.

⁶ Homer-Dixon, Thomas. “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict”. *International Security*. 1994. 19(1): p. 5-40.

⁷ Conca, Ken. “Environmental Cooperation and International Peace”. In Gleditsch and Diehl, eds. 2001: p. 225

⁸ Dabelko, Geoffrey. “Environmental Pathways to Peace-Making”. Presentation. www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/Dabelko%20Wilson%20Center%20EP%20without%20pics%20for%20web.ppt. Accessed: 2/21/07.

⁹ Sandwith, Trevor. “Is it worth the effort and expense? Challenges for implementing transboundary conservation” presented at: *ITTO/IUCN International Workshop on Increasing the Effectiveness of Transboundary Conservation Areas in Tropical Forests*, 17-21 February 2003, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

mentioned as goals of Peace Parks, and they are largely left as unexamined variables in the environmental peacemaking literature.

A more thorough examination of the role of ecotourism in building collaboration within the area of environmental peace-building is needed. Similarly, despite the ongoing research, ecotourism has not been fully explored as a tool for peacemaking and cooperation. Ecotourism, which was coined in the late-seventies, is considered as distinct from nature-based tourism. At the onset of ecotourism research, many scholars argued over the definition and criteria. Even after the International Ecotourism Society coined the definition, “Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people”¹⁰, there was still disagreement over what the definition actually meant. Donald G. Reid of Guelph University in Canada wrote extensively on this particular question in his article “Defining Ecotourism”¹¹. Martha Honey helped to operationalize the definition in her book Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?, by setting seven criteria that ecotourism projects should try to meet. According to Honey, ecotourism should:

- 1) involve travel to natural destinations
- 2) minimize impact
- 3) build environmental awareness
- 4) provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- 5) provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people,
- 6) respect local culture
- 7) support human rights¹²

Nowhere in her criteria is cooperation or promoting peace mentioned. Only a small number of scholars have addressed the peacemaking potential of tourism, largely because these investigations have only examined the exchange between host and visitor.¹³ No one

¹⁰ <http://www.ecotourism.org>. Accessed: 2/19/07

¹¹ Reid, Donald G. Ecotourism Development in Eastern and Southern Africa. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 1999. p. 29.

¹² Honey, Martha. Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who owns Paradise?. 1999. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. p. 22-24

¹³ The 3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism
<http://www.iipt.org/3rdglobalsummit/presentations/EducationForum2005.pdf>

has looked at the peacemaking potential of ecotourism between rival groups in post-conflict regions.

III. How ecotourism can assist in post-conflict reconciliation

As Geoff Dabelko suggests, “sustainable development is critical to ensuring global security, and peace is required for effective development.”¹⁴ Ecotourism can be an essential tool for helping to integrate development and economic incentives into environmental peacemaking efforts. Ecotourism has this potential for several reasons. First, conservation can create incentives for cooperation and trust-building through the interdependence created by the nature of ecosystems. The effect of collaborative conservation also creates economic interdependence due to the revenue from ecotourism. Once livelihoods can be tied to cooperation, the incentive to fight will be reduced significantly. We see this illustrated nowhere more clearly than during the 1924-1994 conflict in Ireland; tourism was essentially the only area where the Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland collaborated across the border. Eric G.E. Zuelow describes the role of tourism during this period: “Even when a virtual cold war existed between the respective governments, the potential financial gain offered by tourism usually trumped political concerns and brought people together¹⁵”. This case doesn’t relate directly to ecotourism, but it is clear that tourism was one area in which it was mutually beneficial for the two sides to work together.

Ecotourism also can create many other forms of economic interdependence, as revenue from conservation moves to different sectors of the economy and different regions. Ecotourism attracts visitors to a central location, but once they arrive, visitors tend to visit other sites and services, which may cross former adversarial boundaries.¹⁶ For example, there is an ecotourist operation in Croatia that brings tourists across the border into

¹⁴ Dabelko, Geoffrey. “From Threat to Opportunity: Exploiting Environmental Pathways to Peace”, Prepared for: “Environment, Peace and the Dialogue Among Civilizations and Cultures” May 9-10, 2006, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/pathways.pdf>. Accessed: 2/17/07

¹⁵ Zuelow, Eric G.E. “Ingredients for Cooperation: Irish Tourism in North South Relations, 1924-1998”. *New Hibernia Review* (10.1) p. 39

¹⁶ Analysis of the Economic Significance of Gorilla Tourism in Uganda, p. 4

Bosnia for river trips on the Neretva, which flows through both countries.¹⁷ This operation creates a situation in which cross-border collaboration are necessary to take advantage of the potential revenue stream. Also, both groups have an incentive to care for the environment between the two countries because it serves as the major tourist attraction. Croatia, through tourism, is expanding cooperation to include other former adversaries such as Montenegro as well. In a study of cross-border tourist flows, Richard M. Lagiewski reports (with respect to Croatia and Montenegro): “This information, that both sides of the border feel working closer within the tourist sector and the governing bodies that influence it, is a necessary and positive first step towards greater collaborations.”¹⁸

This form of cooperation is especially valuable in post-conflict situations, where many people’s livelihoods have been shattered by the conflict, and they often must rely on the unsustainable use of natural resources. This can perpetuate conflict, as resources become increasingly scarce and the catalyst for conflict remains. Ecotourism, especially if managed at the local level with the majority of the revenue going to benefit local people and local conservation needs, can help to diffuse the cycle of conflict and unsustainable resource use.

A second way in which ecotourism builds trust amongst people is through mutual management of natural resources. As Alexander Carius states: “The joint management of shared resources can be not only a way to keep both parties talking, but the key to negotiating a resolution¹⁹”. This logic is not new, but in past studies it has only referred to the management of natural resources and scientific data-gathering activities. Little has been said regarding the effects of economic development through ecotourism on peacemaking. This is where much of the Peace Park literature falls short, as it only

¹⁷ “Trebizat river canoe safari”, http://www.huck-finn.hr/canoeing_trebizat.htm. Accessed 2/15/07.

¹⁸ Lagiewski, Richard. “Tourism in the Cross-Border Region of the Southern Adriatic”. *Rochester Institute of Technology*. 2004. <https://ritdml.rit.edu/dspace/bitstream/1850/1603/1/RLagiewskiConfProc11-2004.pdf>. Accessed. 3/2/07 p.10.

¹⁹ Carius, Alexander. “Environmental Peacebuilding: Conditions for Success”. *Environmental Change and Security Program Report*. 2006. Issue 12. p. 3.

considers the management aspects of threats to plants, wildlife, and human wildlife interaction, not the economic side.

A third way in which ecotourism can create long-term cooperation in post-conflict situations is its emphasis on the grassroots cooperation. Ecotourism is generally considered “low politics” still need some definition. As Dabelko contends, “When environmental issues are a low political priority, they can offer an oasis of cooperation within a larger conflict. In this case, environmental issues do not threaten the most contentious issues in the relationship and thereby may provide a safe first step for dialogue²⁰”.

In effect, environmental collaboration may be a means to circumvent barriers to post-conflict reconciliation erected by stubborn leaders at the top. Again looking to the example of Ireland, because tourism was not a “hot button” issue between the leadership of the two sides they were able to collaborate for many years with less scrutiny from the government than in other areas.

There are some additional economic considerations that come into play when considering the role that ecotourism can play in post-conflict cooperation and development. Ideally, ecotourism seeks to enhance the conservation of the local area through limiting the numbers of tourists who visit. On one hand, this can limit the potential revenue for the local people in the short-term, but it is essential for both long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

In his ground breaking work, RW Butler outlines the Tourist Area Life cycle model, in which he argues that:

“Visitors will come to an area in small numbers initially, restricted by lack of awareness, facilities and local knowledge. As facilities are provided and awareness grows, visitor numbers will increase. With marketing, information dissemination

²⁰ Dabelko, Geoffrey. “From Threat to Opportunity: Exploiting Environmental Pathways to Peace”, Prepared for: “Environment, Peace and the Dialogue Among Civilizations and Cultures” May 9-10, 2006, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/pathways.pdf>. Accessed: 2/17/07

and further facility provision, the area's popularity will grow rapidly. Eventually, however, the rate of increase in visitor number will decline as levels of carrying capacity are reached. These may be identified in terms of environmental factors..."²¹

Butler divides the theorized cycle into six stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline. By definition, ecotourism requires limiting the number of tourists so as to maintain the ecological integrity of the local natural resources. Many tourist destinations eventually become oversaturated, as more and more operators seek profit, which leads to stagnation and eventual decline. Ecotourism, therefore, can provide not only long-term environmental benefits, but long-term economic returns. This however requires significant planning, which again, creates a strong incentive for cooperation.

IV. The Virunga-Bwindi Case

Spanning Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), The Virunga-Bwindi region has experienced many years of devastating war (some stats on duration and casualties), One of the most diverse regions of the world, it encompasses four national parks: Virunga National Park, Volcanoes National Park, the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National. This afro-montane ecosystem (a type of mountain forest native only to the region) is host to a variety of endemic species, the most widely recognized and highly threatened of which is the mountain gorilla. The region contains all of the remaining 706 mountain gorillas in the world.

The region is marred by poverty, having experienced intense violence and conflict for the past decade and a half. Made up of several different ethnic groups the violence commenced in 1994 during the Rwandan genocide. As Hutus fled the country and ended up in refugee camps, many exploited the natural resources in the parks in order to survive²². The incursion of Hutu refugees and ex-militia members into the eastern part of

²¹ Butler, RW "The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Resource Management." *Canadian Geographer* 24. (1980). 6.

²² Lanjouw A., A. Kayitare, H. Rainer, E. Rutagarama, M. Sivha, S. Asuma, and J. Kalpers. 2001. Beyond Boundaries: Transboundary Natural Resource

the Democratic Republic of Congo heightened tensions in the region. This eventually led to another great war in 1997 in the Great Lakes region, involving Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC.



The Virunga-Bwindi Region

Currently, there is an agreement and management plan to protect the gorillas and develop an ecotourism project as a regional whole. As the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in describes the project in their publication “Beyond Boundaries: Transboundary Natural Resource Management for Mountain Gorillas in the Virunga-Bwindi Region”, “regional tourism is understood in this sense as collaborating with the neighboring countries to reduce costs and the investments required to develop the resource, and facilitating regional travel for tourists who wish to spend time exploring the region as a whole”.²³ This collaborative attempt at ecotourism management is significant not only to the success of gorilla conservation, but also to meaningful peace-building and the larger development of the region. The collaborative gorilla tourism management effort serves to

Management for Mountain Gorillas in the Virunga-Bwindi Region. Washington, D.C., U.S.A.: Biodiversity Support Program. <http://www.worldwildlife.org/bsp/publications/africa/126/chap2.htm>. Accessed: 2/19/07

²³ Ibid

meet these goals in three important ways in accordance with the principles laid out in the previous sections.

First, collaborative ecotourism management creates economic interdependencies between former adversaries by reducing capital investment costs (fixed costs) and creating a revenue-sharing agreement. As the International Gorilla Conservation Program states, “regional tourism is understood in this sense as collaborating with the neighboring countries to reduce costs and the investments required to develop the resource, and facilitating regional travel for tourists who wish to spend time exploring the region as a whole²⁴”. The revenue sharing scheme is dependent on the preservation of the gorillas, for without them the tourism revenue will disappear. In Uganda, from 1994 to 1999, gorilla tourism netted foreign exchange earnings of approximately US\$7.7 million, generated US\$15.4 million of sales for the economy, contributed US\$4.77 million in government tax revenues, supported close to 1,700 person years of jobs, and contributed US\$6.93 million to the national income²⁵. This revenue stream then enhances peace-building efforts by creating mutual economic dependencies.

These economic interdependencies reduce impetus for conflict between the former faction, and the international recognition of tourism brings a higher degree of visibility to the reconciliation efforts of the areas. As Charles Besonçon notes from a conversation with a park guard during fact finding mission to the areas,

“I want to tell you a fact that you will not hear anyone talk about. We all know this but never talk about it. Not two kilometers away from here are hundreds of Rwanda Soldiers [in the PNVi-Sud – Mikenno Secteur of DRC]. They are there to secure this region from DRC invasions. The reason no one discusses them is that they are happy these guys are there. In other places where soldiers are posted, there are attacks at night and locals are harassed and sometimes tourists, but in this region, because of the gorillas, and the international interest in the gorillas there are no attacks and the military forces actually create security instead of the other way around.”²⁶

²⁴ [Ibid](#)

²⁵ Moyini Yakobo and Uwimbabazi, “Analysis of the Economic Significance of Gorilla Tourism in Uganda”. International Gorilla Conservation Project. 2000.

²⁶ Besonçon, Charles. “PCIA Virunga-Bwindi Region, Field Visit 2 - Trip Report” [International Gorilla Conservation Project. http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2006/security_igcp_field2_2005.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2006/security_igcp_field2_2005.pdf)

This perhaps highlights the most important effect ecotourism has in reducing tensions and maintaining security; it acts as a magnifying glass to issues surrounding the conflict and creates an additional disincentive for conflict.

Second, the experience of co-managing a natural resource serves to create and sustain peace in the region. The Gorilla Project has set out to standardize rules, service practices, and interpretation guidelines in gorilla tourism across all of the parks in the three countries. These joint training sessions have helped to cultivate common objectives and shared experience, which are required for building trust across previously warring factions. A recent WWF report acknowledges as much: “Having the same rules in each tourism site will strengthen collaboration and reduce competition among the three countries, which jointly have developed the harmonized tourism rules and regulations²⁷”. This commonality of practice towards a shared goal again creates new pathways toward reconciliation that are found only through collaborative work.

Finally, in order to successfully meet the needs of the guests and ensure the survival of the gorillas, both Hutus and Tutsis have had to work together closely, which acts as another pathway in the post-genocide reconciliation process.²⁸ Not only is the collaboration on the conservation important, but on the day to day operations of tourist management.

V. Other examples of potential ecotourism-peacemaking connections

Kashmir and Siachen Glacier

Ever since the split of Pakistan and India in 1940, the mountainous area of Kashmir has remained contested and the two countries have fought bitterly over who has the rights to

²⁷ Lanjouw A., A. Kayitare, H. Rainer, E. Rutagarama, M. Sivha, S. Asuma, and J. Kalpers. 2001. *Beyond Boundaries: Transboundary Natural Resource Management for Mountain Gorillas in the Virunga-Bwindi Region*. Washington, D.C., U.S.A.: Biodiversity Support Program. <http://www.worldwildlife.org/bsp/publications/africa/126/chap2.htm>. Accessed: 2/19/07

²⁸ Speculative claim maybe ask charles.besancon@gmail.com or Amy at AWF.

this piece of land. The area is home to a number of endangered and threatened species, such as the snow leopard.

Indian and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir in 1947 and 1972. After the fighting of the Seventies a “Line of Control” was drawn surrounding the glaciers, which still remains the source of tension today²⁹. Throughout the region there are natural and cultural commonalities, which could be used to begin building cooperation. In both countries there is a strong history of mountaineering; the region contains K2, one of the world’s most famous summits. Collaboration around K2 could prove fruitful and steps in this direction are already occurring. As Giuliano Tallone documents³⁰,

“....a joint Indian and Pakistani mountaineering expedition, organized by Roger Payne of UIAA (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation) and IUCN, organized a Symbolic Peace Climb (August 24-29, 2002) involving Indians and Pakistanis, with a series of climbs in the Aletsch Glacier area, and highlighted the Siachen issue.”

Based on the international mountaineering interest around the region, Indians and Pakistanis at the grassroots level could begin to come together over this issue.

Ecotourism, with a focus on mountaineering and trekking, managed at the local level, could help to build trust and cooperation between Indians and Pakistanis in the Kashmir region. There are already visions of a collaborative Peace Park, in which a number of scholars have advocated ecotourism as a funding mechanism³¹.

In the case of Siachen and Kashmir more broadly, ecotourism can contribute significantly to the reconciliation process in three distinct ways. First, it will create a source of income that can be tied directly to cooperation and stability, which can serve to jumpstart more

²⁹ Giuliano Tallone, “Siachen Peace Park: A Case Study for the Valorisation of High Mountain Ecosystems” Transboundary Protected Areas in the Governance Stream of the 5th World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa, 12-13 September 2003.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ali, Saleem. “Siachen Peace Park: Moving from concept to reality”. International Environmental Security Conference, The Hague, May 11, 2004.
<http://www.envirosecurity.org/conference/working/K2PeacePark.pdf>. Accessed: 3/5/07.

formal peace processes. Second, because mountaineering routes are based on ecological conditions and aesthetic considerations that cross political boundaries, cooperation in ecotourism could offer a larger set of options to tourists, and thus increase the earnings potential of both Indians and Pakistanis. This would allow the carrying capacity of any given ecotourism operation to expand significantly, should both sides of the border be consistently accessible. Third, managing and taking pride in the natural heritage of the area can create a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Ethiopia and Eritrea

After a two-year war from 1998-2000 in which 100,000 Ethiopian and Eritreans were killed over a 400 square kilometer piece of land, the two governments still maintain cold relations. This bizarre war was fought by two leaders who were from the same ethnic group, spoke the same language, practiced the same religion, and fought as allies in a previous war. The war devastated the economies of both countries and severely degraded the environment.

Ethiopia and Eritrea form one of Africa's birding hotspots, possessing 861 species, including 30 species endemic³²Currently, there are numerous bird-watching enthusiasts who are waiting eagerly for the development of ecotourist facilities and the cessation of tensions between the two countries³³.

Considering the uniqueness of the resource and the preexisting demand, implementing community-based ecotourism along this border region and between the two sides, would be able to serve several needs at once. It would provide much-needed economic development, and it would necessitate cooperation between the groups in both countries as the birdlife is not constrained to political borders. This would then hopefully be a start of renewed trust that was shattered during the 1998-2000 war. In addition, if managed at

³² Vivero Pol, Jose Luis. *A Guide to Endemic Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea*. 2001. Shama Books.

³³ "Birdwatching tourism ready for take off in Eritrea". 7/17/2006.
<http://www.planetark.org/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/37272/newsDate/17-Jul-2006/story.htm>. Accessed: 3/4/07/

the community level, ecotourism operations could circumvent some of the tensions at the higher government levels.

VI. Conclusions

This paper has described why ecotourism should be taken seriously as another potential tool to promote environmental peacemaking. We have provided both a framework for how to think about ecotourism in post-conflict situations, as well as examples of ongoing successes and areas where the potential exists for ecotourism to help with peacemaking efforts.

However, ecotourism does face significant obstacles that may limit its effectiveness.

Ecotourism is only applicable in the first and final stages of the conflict continuum (avoiding conflict and post-conflict trust building). It cannot be applied to situations where the conflict is ongoing since tourists cannot be expected to visit war zones.

A second challenge regards revenue sharing among local communities and the degree of local involvement in the management processes. Because of the rather loose and unquantifiable definition of ecotourism, the degree to which locals are involved in the decision-making and receive revenue is often specific to the individual project. Often foreign investors or the domestic elite provide the necessary capital, leaving the locals, who are most often more heavily impacted by the presence of conflict, out of the loop. This can also fuel pre-existing conflicts, as we have seen in many cases of people versus parks (examples?), which can often occur when conservation limits the ability of people to eke out a livelihood from the natural resource base³⁴.

Finally, if ecotourism is managed at the local level, there is the possibility that competition for tourists may create larger conflicts over scarce tourist revenue, which is

³⁴ Schwartzman, Stephan , Daniel Nepstad, and Adriana Moreira “Arguing Tropical Forest Conservation: People versus Parks” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 14, No. 5.Oct., 2000, p. 1370-1374

why some higher-level planning may be necessary. Ecotourism limits the number of visitors, which has the potential to create competition between local groups, some of which may have a history of conflict. It is important to note, however, that if all groups have some stake in the revenue stream from ecotourism they will have a strong incentive not to restart the conflict and scare away the tourists.

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