

Tourism as “A Force for World Peace” The Politics of Tourism, Tourism as Governmentality and the Tourism Boycott of Guatemala

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Abstract

This article shifts the typical analysis of the “politics of tourism” to a study of the use of tourism as a mechanism of politics in an international scale. This ethnographic history presents the case of the tourism boycott of Guatemala that was organized by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers in 1979. This article analyzes the responses and effects of the boycott, whose goal was to pressure the military government to desist its violation of human rights. Significantly, the boycott, a mobilization of transnational NGOs, represents an early example of neoliberal global governmentality that successfully pushed Guatemala to adopt new neoliberal strategies of tourism development and promotion.

Keywords: Neo-liberalism, governmentality, tourism politics, tourism as politics, Human Rights, tourism boycotts, heritage tourism.

The promise of Tourism as “a force for world peace”

Introduction

Tourism as “a force for world peace” ignites the imagination of many, from Popes and presidents to academics (D’Amore, 1988a, 1988b; Jafari, 1989) and has certainly inspired the inauguration of this new Journal of Tourism and Peace Research. In general there are two aspects or assumptions to this idea. First, travel brings people together in host-guest relations that foster understandings of cultural differences, goodwill, and the desire to peacefully overcome local and world problems. Second, tourism development is itself a positive force that addresses poverty, underdevelopment, conflicts, etc. by developing economic opportunities and growth for marginalized communities. Tourism thus reduces the grounds for violence, hate, discrimination, and aggression. At least, this is often the logic, motivation, and message of tourism policies and projects of governments, large and small, when they choose to tourism as a socioeconomic strategy. It is not hard to find studies that critique or disprove this ideology of tourism as a force of peace. One might argue that it is less the cause than a product of peace, since tourism of any scale seems to depend heavily upon stable, peaceful civil society in order for a tourism economy to be established. This is evident by the fact that tourism is nearly always truncated, closed down or un-developed in countries or regions marked by political instability and violent conflicts (Teye, 1986).

Nonetheless, in this ideological notion, tourism is viewed as a force and agent of peace and somewhat naively conceived as an apolitical or non-political determinant. It is therefore not conceived or recognized as a means or strategy of governing civil society, much less as a political weapon. The explicit *political use of tourism as a means to conduct international politics* flies in the face of the ideological ideal of tourism as “a real force of world peace.” It seems contradictory, even if the goal of this explicit political use of tourism as politics is to indeed pressure a nation-state to institute peace in its territory. In tourism studies generally, this use of tourism as politics has been ignored and overlooked primarily because peace, or internal harmony and well-being is in fact already presupposed not only as a necessary condition of tourism but as an actual, de facto material reality. Where there is no peace, there are lists of travel warnings against visiting that location! As well, “tourism as politics” is a topic that has been historically ignored in the context of the traditional focus on “tourism impact”: When impacts are positive, tourism is construed not as politics but as an economic force that contributes to social well-being (a form of “peace”). But, when impacts are “negative” then tourism is contributing to conditions that are antithetical to “peace.” Certainly, anthropologists of tourism nearly always investigate the politics of tourism — i.e., the conflicts and negotiations between actors in their struggles to control tourism. But the study of how tourism functions as politics per se, that is, as a political mechanism, tool, strategy, method, tactic of both governing civil society and of conducting politics between agents of differing scale is virtually non-existent. If we take Foucault’s inversion of Clausewitz seriously that “peace is a continuation of war by other means” and we accept the truism that tourism mostly flourishes in conditions of peace,¹ then we should be prompted to ask: How does tourism operate as politics *in the place of* explicitly marked forms of political action as if it were *not* politics, but “only” economic policy or economic development? Thus, how is tourism a mode of governmentality? By governmentality, we follow Foucault’s early prescriptions (Foucault, 1991a, b, c; Burchell, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Rose, 1996; 1999) of a strategy or meta-strategies that deploy “things” — such as laws that regulate rights over heritage, urban development and infrastructure, ways tabulating and classifying visitors, spatial organization and structures that define patterns and modes of mobility, objects and materials forms defined as heritage, art, or culture worth of being seen — as a means to govern, control and regulate citizen-subjects (instead of using laws that regulate directly the actions and behaviors of citizens). Clearly tourism is governmentality in this sense when we consider policies of tourism development and legal regulations of industry practices. In addition to this obvious sense, tourism is a big umbrella concept for a whole series of empirically grounded strategies — rather meta-strategies *of and for governing* — that target a variety of subjects, that deploy a variety of “things,” and that operate at the full range of scale, from local society to national cultural spheres to international publics.

To shift research from the “politics of tourism” to how “tourism is politics” and governmentality are difficult questions to formulate. They do not appear as common-sense questions or issues. However, the case of the “withholding” of tourism (a boycott) by non-state transnational actors to wage politics against a sovereign nation raise these broader theoretical issues of tourism as politics and tourism as governmentality. Again, the use of tourism as politics is counter-intuitive, even if one does not subscribe to the ideological view of tourism as a force of peace. Boycotting tourism seems to be a bit different than boycotting broccoli (e.g.,

Fischer & Benson 2006), not so much in terms of the mechanics of how they are mobilized. Rather, the difference is in terms of what they mean and how they work as governmental mechanisms of international politics. Consider that the Guatemalan government found it to be unintelligible and somewhat irrelevant when in 1979 the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) launched a consumer boycott of tourism to Guatemala.

The labor union developed this strategy as a means to wage an economic and public relations war against the Guatemalan national government with the long-term goal of ending state perpetrated violence against its people. Today, when governments rule via transnational NGO proxies and social movements are conducted by the internet, the boycott does not seem radical, nor is it unintelligible. In the historical context of the onset of new modes of globalization, transnationalism, and the postmodernization of tourism, the 1979 Guatemala tourism boycott illustrates a transformative shift in the nature and conditions of the politics of tourism. The Guatemalan state, accustomed to conduct politics with pre-established social actors — other nation-states, internal communities, international legal institutions, and development banks — could not effectively respond to the boycott because at first it did not know who it was fighting and second how to fight once the opposition was identified.

The significance of this case study can be grasped in two points. On the one hand, it reveals a significant moment in the history of the emergence of new forms of transnational governmentality via networks of NGO/INGOs. The successful boycott of Guatemala, pioneered through the tourism, became a model of subsequent transnational NGO strategies of and for political action. On the other hand, the case study reveals that tourism is itself a mode or register of governmentality, that is a strategy and logic of governance, which nation-states as well as non-state agents put into play in their conduct of politics at global and local arenas. This analysis reveals the transformation of tourism from a field of struggle and political weapon to a strategy of governing based in the neoliberalization of the Guatemalan state.

This article offers an ethnographic analysis of original documents that were recently given by the IUF to the first author. The disclosure of this historical archive provides the rare opportunity to develop an ethnographically detailed history of this unique conflict. By extended quotation from these texts we re-present not only the plurality of “voices” but the logic, assumptions and tactics involved. Significantly, the politics is expressed in threats, demands, and proclamations, but these in turn reveal conflicts within and between understandings of what is tourism and how tourism is conceived not only as economic activity but as political action. The article begins with a brief background to the situation and moves quickly into the give and take of the political action between the major players, primarily the Guatemalan state and the IUF, and secondarily the US State Department. The analysis focuses on the differing tactics of words used in official correspondence, newspaper articles, official governmental statements, and other media as the political action and logics of the conflict. Although this article brackets the underlying sociopolitical contexts of Guatemala (see, for example, Carmack, 1988; Manz, 1988; Jonas, 1991; Simon, 1987), we seek to track how shifts in the conception of tourism by the Guatemalan state articulated with changes in national politics. In turn we argue that these shifts converted tourism from a not well appreciated economic activity in Guatemala to a strategic mode of governmental politics of the state, in other words how it became an explicitly conceived form of governmentality (Burtner, 2004; Castañeda, 2009a, b).

An unlikely collusion:

Tourism as politics and strategies for defending the tourism image of the nation

Boycotts are common political mechanisms used by labor unions to gain economic results and by nation-states for expressly political goals in international relations. They work when consumers and citizens lend their whole hearted support. What is not so common is for labor unions, especially when organized in transnational alliance with other advocacy groups, seek expressly political (versus economic) goals against a nation-state. Such is the case with the 1979 IUF boycott of tourism to Guatemala. What is even more surprising is that this labor initiated gambit would have a colluding ally in the US government which was then led by a famously conservative president. The US State Department travel advisory against Guatemala in the early 1980s is in effect a form of tourism boycott. These uses of tourism as politics caught the Guatemalan government off-guard. In developing responses, the Guatemalan government created new strategies and politics of tourism.

The IUF boycott caused confusion among high level Guatemalan government officials. They could not identify who and where was the power behind the boycott, in part because it coincided with negative U.S. State Department travel advisories, continual outcry in the international media against Guatemalan repression, and the ongoing international human rights advocacy against the military government. In response, members of the state and national tourism industry retaliated through diplomatic, public relations and information channels against what they viewed as international interventions. This analysis of recently released archival documents from the IUF and INGUAT offices, supported by extensive field research, reveals the strategies and tactics in the political negotiations in tourism and the use of tourism as a political mechanism in what was then an emerging field of power shaped by transnational NGOs that work outside and alongside state governments, development banks, and international legal institutions.

Initially, Guatemalan government officials attempted to attack the more visible organizations within the network of entities involved, such as Amnesty International (Simon, 1987:72-73). In one of its circulars related to its work on Guatemalan tourism, the IUF explained how Guatemalan officials attempted to strike at leaders of the organized action using aggressive face-to-face confrontation and threats of legal action. However, faulty information and a lack of understanding of how the decentralized solidarity network functioned radically diminished the potential power of such tactics. Mistakes and misdirected responses to the boycott reduced the Guatemalan government's initial responses to what appeared to the international community as a series of haphazard complaints by frustrated and confused officials. These tactics were not the formidable and intimidating official response that the Guatemalan government believed it had enacted. An IUF memo explains that:

Mr. Alvaro Arzú, director of INGUAT, traveled to Europe in January to counteract publicity about the tourist boycott. On January 28, he visited Amnesty International at their headquarters in London (he had previously threatened AI with legal action). AI denied responsibility for the boycott and told Arzú to contact the IUF. Arzú has not contacted us. However, he reportedly went to Germany to contact the tourist office there. It is likely that he has also visited other European countries (IUF, 1980:2).

Those familiar with the tactics of intimidation that the military government used to silence opposition within Guatemala can recognize the strategy. Angry Guatemalan officials of the Lucas García administration (one of the most brutally repressive military presidencies in Guatemala) were flying from one European country to another in search of opposition organization leaders that they could confront, intimidate, and manipulate. The lack of success in finding such leaders points to a lack of understanding of the mechanics of the boycott and the field of transnational power politics.

Conservative national and international groups viewed the immediate, highly public, angry and disorganized way the government reacted with concern and seriously questioned Arzú's and the Lucas García administration's abilities to effectively handle international opposition. The IUF noted in its circular that a U.S. business publication reported that “many tourist operators were critical of Arzú's handling of the boycott announcement and think he overreacted by giving such importance to a news item which otherwise might have gone largely unnoticed” (ibid). This was a public message from private sector to government that in turn relied on intimidation to force INGUAT and its representatives to show more restraint and find more effective, less visible tactics for dealing with the boycott.

Weapons of the strong versus the capillary power of transnational micropolitics

Public face-to-face confrontations between high level representatives of opposing groups were part of a broader counter-campaign that used public and private discourse such as newspaper articles, editorials, telexes, written letters, and published bulletins as tactics to attain political goals. These documents attempted to defend the industry and country and discredit human rights organizations. Numerous articles countering the boycott were published in the Guatemalan press, ranging from calm dismissals of the boycott as irrelevant and having little or no impact to strong denunciations of international human rights organizations' interventionism, for example: “Tourism increases in January. [says] INGUAT Director Alvaro Arzú” (Deleon, 1980:5) and “Tourism Boycott: We are Prisoners of Amnesty International” (Anonymous, 1979a).² Other articles focused on the impact the boycott would have on workers: “Protests Against the Tourism Boycott of the Country: Diverse Groups Address the Swiss Institution that Promotes this Action Against Guatemala” (Anonymous, 1979c) and “Tourism Boycott of Guatemala Will Effect 50,000 Guatemalans” (Anonymous, 1979d). Although there were attempts to conceal the state's hand by making these responses seem to originate from broad-based and grassroots sectors of society, the central organizing function of INGUAT in the counter-campaign quickly became apparent.

By mid-December, extensive coverage of the boycott was given in the Guatemalan press. The dominant tone was that this was an “international conspiracy against Guatemala,” that the workers employed in the tourist industry would be the first to suffer, and that the boycott campaign was an “attack on human rights.” In late December and early January the IUF secretary received about a dozen telexes in quick succession, from various professional organizations of employers or self-employed artisans connected with the tourist industry, protesting against the boycott decision in this language. The text of these cables later appeared in full-page advertisements in the Guatemalan press, published under the auspices of the

government’s tourist institute INGUAT, under the title “The workers’ answer to the tourist boycott of Guatemala” (IUF, 1980:1).

Ironically, the underlying narrative of government responses was that the human rights organizations involved in the “anti-Guatemala campaign” were in their own ways neo-colonialist and imperialist and, far from defending human rights, they were perpetrating violations. This tactical inversion of accusations was a standard way for the government to defend its use of violence and repression during last years of the country’s long civil war.

Newspaper articles, editorials, and paid advertisements from workers organizations decried the foreign interventionism of the boycott supporters. They accused boycott organizers of engineering an attack not on the Guatemalan government, but on Guatemalan workers that deprived them of basic human rights, including the right to work and earn a living under what were already terrible economic circumstances. Moreover, the boycott was an assault against what was, in the words of one article, one of the most socially and economically equitable sectors in the economy, tourism:

It will not be the government or politicians who will be the affected by the results of the tourist boycott of Guatemala, but 50,000 Guatemalan workers who work for the tourism industry and another 150,000 that are indirectly involved. The Chamber of Tourism of Guatemala... said that the tourism industry is possibly, among all the industries, the best in terms of redistributing income and for that reason the Guatemalans who work for hotels, restaurants, airlines, travel agencies, in artisanry, and as tour guides, among other activities, would be the ones to suffer should this campaign achieve its objectives (Anonymous, 1979d).

The power of this doublespeak relies on the ideological understanding of tourism as a force of peace that has the power to resolve socioeconomic problems. Guatemalan trade unions were quick to respond, as explained in an IUF internal memo:

On January 30, the Democratic Front Against Repression, a broad coalition of the Guatemalan opposition including some 150 organizations... issued a statement supporting the IUF tourist boycott. The statement affirms that the boycott is likely to adversely affect a limited group of Guatemalan businessmen and foreign investors, and not the workers, as is “demagogically claimed by employer’s associations and the government.” Income from tourism has not benefited the popular sectors, the statement continued: on the contrary, hotel and restaurant workers have been repressed whenever they have asked for an increase of their wages (which now amount to between US\$1.69 and \$3 per day). Not a single union attempting to organize workers in the tourist industry has ever been recognized by the government... attempts to organize unions were smashed by imprisoning and dismissing the organizers, such as was the case at the Hotel Camino Real, the Motel Plaza or the Conquistador Sheraton. The statement concludes: “The Democratic Front Against Repression, which thoroughly knows the problems the workers are facing, categorically rejects the government’s and employer’s arguments according to which the boycott will hurt the workers and affirms its determined support of the means of pressure adopted” (IUF, 1980:2).

In addition to public rebuttals in the Guatemalan press and private meetings with international NGO leadership that aimed to intimidate, Guatemalan governmental representatives engaged the letter-writing campaigns of the IUF and its international allies. An illustrative exchange is correspondence between the Central America Working Group (C.A.W.G.) based in Philadelphia and the Guatemalan Embassy in Washington DC. The first is an open letter to area travel agencies from Portia Jones, Guatemala Sub-committee of C.A.W.G., dated January 24, 1980, with copies to Alvaro Arzú:

I am writing on behalf of the Central America Working Group, formed last year by a number of Philadelphians concerned about economic injustice and government sponsored repression in Guatemala and other Central American countries. We attempt to educate ourselves and others about Central America, and to undertake programs, such as public forums, fundraising for humanitarian assistance to victims of violence, and lobbying on questions of U.S. policy toward the region.

Although the Guatemalan economy by some measures is doing very well, and prospects are good, current government development plans hold little hope for improving the lot of the poor majority. Social programs are being cut, and dissent by workers, peasants, and students is brutally repressed. According to Amnesty International, 2,000 people have been killed in Guatemala for political reasons in the last 18 months.

The third largest source of foreign exchange for Guatemala is tourism, which is why I write to you. We would like U.S. citizens to show their disapproval of the Guatemalan situation by choosing to go elsewhere for their vacations. We are asking your help in informing prospective travelers about the situation there and in advising them of alternatives for their travel plans.

We will have materials available on Guatemalan tourism and on the human rights situation. We would like to share these with you. Someone from the Central America Working Group will be calling to make an appointment to speak with you on these issues.

The C.A.W.G. received a reply from Maria de Landis, Tourist Delegate in the Guatemalan Embassy (January 31, 1980). Copies were also sent to the Attorney General, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the US State Department:

Copies of your recent letters to several agencies in Philadelphia have been referred to me. Since they are highly defamatory in nature, I would suggest that you obtain legal counsel before proceeding further with your campaign against tourism in Guatemala.

In order to evaluate the scope and thrust of what you are attempting to do, several questions must be answered: What is the "Central America Working Group"? Specifically, is it a non-profit "educational" or other corporate entity? Under the laws of what state is it organized? Are you authorized, either under city or state law, to solicit funds from the public? Do you have IRS tax exemption status? Who are your officers and directors? What is your present source of funding? What are your unstated objectives? Have you or any other member of your "Group" ever visited

Guatemala? And, apart from uncorroborated newspaper clippings, already disclaimed by responsible government officials in Guatemala, what “Materials” do you have bearing on the “human rights situation” in Guatemala?

Without answers to these questions, I am compelled to assume that you are an organization operating in violation of the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

During my years in my present position, I am aware of no case in which a tourist was killed, injured, robbed, or criminally assaulted while in Guatemala. It is a record of which I am proud, and a record known to most travel agents.

As you may be aware, the U.S. Department of Justice recently filed a suit against the City of Philadelphia alleging deprivation of minority rights in the administration of criminal justice in that city. If your concern for “human rights” must find expression somewhere, would it not be best to start at home?

This letter illustrates an interesting mix of cajoling, threat, dismissal, accusations, and assertion. While the overt purpose was to deny the allegations that tourists, particularly American tourists, were unsafe, the threat derives from the both the challenged legality, legitimacy and political agenda, as well as the request to collect information on the organizations and its members and Guatemalans with whom they work. The insinuation of making a black list, while threatening for Guatemalan citizens, was misplaced when directed to international advocacy groups. It illustrates both the lack of knowledge of whom or what is leading the boycott and how to effectively politick against this decentralized alliance of NGOs. Indeed, those involved with the boycott specifically conceived of their politics as a guerilla force, a capillary network of mobile cells that could effect diffused and pervasive pressure via pragmatic enlistment of citizens and other groups. This transnational micropolitics is one crucial moment in a broader history that has led to the contemporary organization, practices, and political strategies of transnational advocacy groups.

Travel advisories as tourism boycott: re-routing Guatemala’s response

In an unexpected historical contingency, IUF gained the unlikely ally of the US government. Although Carter had sanctioned US aid to Guatemala in 1977, his administration did not register a travel advisory against Guatemala. Upon taking office in 1981, Reagan re-established military and non-military aid to Guatemala and began to build a strong alliance with the Lucas García administration as part of his campaign against communism in Central America (Hoge, 1981; The Nation, Aug. 26, 1981). By the end of the year, however, the U.S. State Department in an independent move that fueled antagonism with the Reagan regime issued the first ever travel advisory to Guatemala.

Triggered by bombings of a prominent hotel in Panajachel and a telephone office in Antigua (Anonymous, 1981c), an Eastern Airlines flight and the Guatemala City offices of the Honduran airline (Ducassi, 1981), Americans were warned against travel to Guatemala. In an August 6, 1981 telex to James R. Gorson, Director of Facilitation, Air Transport Association of America, the State Department:

Advises Citizens to exercise extreme caution if they travel in Guatemala. The Republic of Guatemala is currently facing an attack from well organized communist insurgents. One American citizen has been kidnapped there, and two murdered. Although non (sic) of these victims was a tourist, the possibility of American citizens being caught in the crossfire between guerillas and government forces, or hurt in a terrorist incident, is increasing. The tourists center of Chichicastenango was recently occupied by guerrilla forces: terriost (sic) bombs have been set off near a hotel at Lake Atitlan and in the City of Antigua (Department of State, 1981; emphasis/italics added).

This official recognition of violence in Guatemala by the US was a powerful sign that gave “a commercial kiss of death” to Guatemala’s tourism industry according to the media (Cunningham, 1981; Gugliotta, 1981; Hoge, 1981; Anonymous, 1981c).

Levels of travel warnings fluctuated in the next four years as they became more attuned to Reagan policy (Ducassi, 1981; Keshishian, 1984; Anonymous, 1984b). For example, in September 1982 the advisory was downgraded as a good-will gesture from the Reagan administration to the new Ríos Montt government (Anonymous, 1982b).

The modification of the travel advisory was announced last week by the State Department in a note to President Efraín Ríos Montt... “The level of violence in Guatemala City and certain other areas has been reduced substantially since the change in government,” the revised advisory said in reference to the March 23 military coup that brought Ríos Montt to power. *A warning in the old advisory, imposed a year ago, to exercise “extreme caution” was downgraded to “caution”* (Chardy 1982; italics/emphasis added).

North American human rights groups, such as the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs, decried the decision. “The Council charged the modification of the year-old Guatemalan travel advisory was a politically motivated move designed to bolster U.S. requests for aid to Ríos Montt’s government” (ibid). Nonetheless, the initial advisory, based in the State Department’s very real and legitimate concern for the safety of US citizens, had already made its effects on the international scene. The advisory, in both strong and weak forms, had worked in collusion with the IUF boycott in an unexpected contingency that was welcomed by the network of international advocacy groups. For its part, the Reagan administration was caught in unwanted complicity, a contradiction that was reduced with the downgrading.

The advisories forced Guatemalan government representatives to publicly acknowledge the country’s human rights record. The Guatemalan strategy was to acknowledge violence, but minimize its significance in three ways via discursive means in national and international media and through official communiqués. First, safety was converted to a question of US citizens; second the violence was “normalized”; third, anti-US hegemony discourse was invoked.

Assaults against tourists and related problems had high visibility in both Guatemalan and international headlines for many years: “*They may recommend no more travel to Guatemala: the Assassination of Tourists in Nebaj causes International Outrage*” (Menéndez, 1979; Anonymous, 1979b). In the Nebaj case, the tourists were Japanese and French, not North American, which gave space for a rhetorical move. Citing an October 4, 1981 *New York Times*

article, Simon illustrates how Guatemalan dignitaries attempted to reorient the discussion from one of security in general to one of security for North Americans.

On August 6, 1981 the U.S. State Department, usually eager to promote a positive image of Guatemala, issued a travel advisory recommending that U.S. citizens refrain from traveling to Guatemala except for "essential visits," and even then, to avoid virtually every tourist spot outside Guatemala City. The State Department blamed "leftist terrorist" violence for these reluctant measures. The Guatemalan government, incensed, produced its own response, stating that "the government of Guatemala is taking all necessary precautions to preserve its unblemished record of providing security for American tourists" (Simon, 1987:73).

The second tactic was for government representatives to point out that Guatemala had socio-political problems no worse than Ireland, Italy or the Middle East. When fielding questions about the burning of the Spanish Embassy on January 31st and the rising level of daily violence during a February 1980 interview, INGUAT Director Arzú stressed that "(v)iolence is not an obstacle for maintaining or increasing tourism to Guatemala, since those involved in tourism are aware that such acts of violence are occurring throughout the world..." (Deleon, 1980:5).

Mr. Arzú went on to state, in reference to his statement, that in Rome, Italy, for example, acts of violence have occurred, as there has in Spain, "where it is more intense." "Yesterday... we read in the newspapers of the assassination of important individuals ... in Rome, such as judges and students, killed on their university campuses. The same is occurring in Spain, he added, where the cycle of violence is more intense, and where there are problems in the Basque countries, etc., which brings us to the question, what country is outside the limits of [or] does not suffer from violence? None" (ibid:5).

Media editorials and commentaries in Guatemala frequently sought to normalize the level of violence and insecurity. "Conservative Guatemalans compare violence in their own country to violence in the United States to diminish the enormity of statistics, and their significance" (Simon, 1987:189). In a 1981 interview the Assistant Director of INGUAT "cushioned her advice to avoid the Quiché department, saying, 'Well, you wouldn't think of walking down 42nd Street in New York City, would you? It's the same thing here'" (ibid).

As a third tactic, state representatives argued Guatemala was being unfairly singled out for U.S. scrutiny given that violence was commonplace within societies worldwide. The historical tendency of the US to intervene in Latin America was invoked in rhetoric that asserted Guatemala's right to national sovereignty. In media releases, US hegemony was criticized, with recommendations that foreign advocates focus on the plentiful social injustices of their own governments and social systems and leave Guatemalans to the job of caring for their own people. This appropriation and inversion of anti- and post-colonial arguments by the right-wing military government gave pause to the international left. Yet, the tactic of blatant dismissal of the violations charged against Guatemala backfired. Rather than diminishing support for the boycott, these denials infuriated many in the international community, triggering even stronger and broader support for additional sanctions, including the proposed boycotts of other key Guatemalan industries, such as coffee (FDCR, 1980) and Coca-cola (Frundt, 1987a, 1987b). With the addition of other boycotts on Guatemala's economy, the tourism embargo had played a strategic and central role in the panoply of political tactics used by the decentralized network of transnational rights and advocacy groups.

From the use of tourism as politics to the politics of tourism: INGUAT’s new strategies

The tourism boycott had a crippling effect (Gatica Trejo, 1982; Anonymous, 1980a, 1980d, 1981a). *Travel Weekly* reported that:

U.S. citizens selecting Guatemala as their first destination in the first three months of 1981 declined by nearly 50% from the same period in 1980, from 19,849 to 11,772. Between 1979 and 1980, U.S. travelers... to Guatemala decreased from 90,225 to 64,679... an estimated 80% drop in the flow of tourists from the U.S. and nearly a 50% drop in ... traffic from the U.S. in the first three months of this year (Travel Weekly 1981).

Industry agencies recognized that they must find new strategies to “fight” and “defend” themselves against the boycott and “internal terrorist agitation,” and to proactively “target” and “capture” new markets that had not and could not be affected by it (Anonymous, 1981b, 1982c). This rhetoric coincided with the shift under the Reagan administration from anti-communism to anti-terrorism, which would emerge as the dominant discourse of US international affairs in the “new world order” of the 21st century.

Tourism promotions for 1981 attempt to counteract terrorism: The decrease in the income stemming from the Guatemalan tourism industry is an irrefutable and widely recognized phenomenon by both the Guatemalan private sector and the Guatemalan State. The boycott that is taking place in the international markets against the Guatemalan tourism industry/promotions and the *existence of terrorist agitation* inside the country, are two of the greatest determining factors that are dissuading travelers and have had negative repercussions on the programs promoted by the Guatemala Tourist Commission – INGUAT-. Since last October, INGUAT has announced that it is re-launching a more *aggressive campaign to counteract* the economic effects on tourism that the conflictive/convulsive political situation in Central America over the last fifteen months has produced (Anonymous, 1980b, italics/emphasis added).

This “new more aggressive INGUAT campaign” included proposals for legislative reforms to support tourism development, economic incentives to boost domestic tourism by providing Guatemalan workers with vacation funds for domestic travel, a “social tourism” campaign to create high-end, educational tourism led by renowned scholars, and employment of public relations firms to improve Guatemala’s image abroad (Anonymous, 1980e, 1980c). The government shifted from using tourism as a political tool, to actually create policy to improve its image in the international media and strategies to creating viable governmental policies and political strategies to foster tourism. This was a political-governmental initiative to create “standard” forms of tourism and special market types that have since proliferated in the “postmodern era” of contemporary globalization under labels such as alternative, sustainable and eco- tourism.

[A] request was made that the Congress of the Republic and the Chamber of Tourism support the submission of a law to develop tourism within Guatemala. It was suggested that ... employers give a credit of two months worth of wages to workers... [to] be used to travel throughout and get to know Guatemala. ... INGUAT has developed ... a campaign entitled ‘social tourism’ through which it has organized diverse excursions with scholars, targeting picturesque, historical and cultural zones/locations. In addition, on December 16th INGUAT

Director Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen Esq. informed the private sector of the tourism industry that the Institute is intending to allocate 50% of its overall budget (which is approximately 3 million quetzales) in 1981 to creating a positive image of Guatemala and attracting tourists to the country (Anonymous, 1980e).

Six months later at the *II Convención Nacional de Hoteleros* in Quetzaltenango (May 29-31, 1981), private sector and public agencies discussed and mobilized support for the new INGUAT campaign proposals. Participants included 24 of the country's most prominent hotel owners and representatives of INGUAT, *la Cámara de Turismo, el Instituto Técnico de Capacitación, and la Corporación Financiera Nacional*. A deepening crisis in the hotel industry had presented in the form of non-seasonal loss of occupancy that broke with rates of the previous five years. While occupancy remained stable at 70% from June 1979 to May 1980, it dropped from June 1980 to May 1981 to 43% (Anonymous 1981b). Convention participants highlighted political tensions and domestic terrorism as causes for this sector-wide loss, and solicited government aid to promote Guatemalan tourism abroad and create new markets (ibid).

At the Second National Convention of Hotel Owners, it was agreed to request the central government for greater support to INGUAT for their activities in promoting tourism among foreign markets. The Guatemala Bureau of Conventions and Visitors suggested ... a plan to open new markets, promoting Guatemala as a center for regional and international conventions, promoting characteristics such as its climate and low prices (ibid).

The most significant initiatives that were adopted included the *Ley de Fomento de Turismo*, social tourism initiative, and the use public relations firms. Other proposals were not given funds due to the civil war and a series of military coups. Within a year the Lucas García administration was overthrown by General Efraín Ríos Montt (1982), who in turn was deposed by General Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores who held office from 1983-86.

In a neoliberal maneuver before the era of neoliberalism, INGUAT hired a North American firm to create a publicity campaign to re-capture the US market, which had suffered a 50% first quarter drop between 1980 and 1981. In 1981, *Needham & Grohmann*, a New York hotel and travel advertising agency, was given \$1.5 million, 50% of INGUAT's total annual budget, to develop a PR campaign for North American, Canadian and European markets (Anonymous, 1981d; Lamarca, 1981:1). INGUAT increased its presence at international travel conferences, coordinated drops in air/land carrier package rates, and initiated diplomatic talks with the US.

Federico Fahsen, [the new] director of the Guatemalan National Tourist Institute (INGUAT) [beginning in 1981], visited Washington and along with the Hoteliers Association petitioned President Reagan to have the original advisory lifted, claiming it was damaging the Guatemalan tourism industry. In 1978-79 the tourist trade was the third source of income in Guatemala earning \$200 million a year. That figure fell to \$60 million in 1982 according to Inforpress Centroamericana. Additional efforts to save the industry are being made by Guatemala's national airline, Aviateca... [with] offers [of] cut-rate airline packages from Miami for \$200 [for] three nights and four days. Aviateca also sponsored a conference at the International Trade Mart in New Orleans. The Mart has approximately 1700 members, mostly U.S. business people. Two-hundred hotel and agency managers and tourist promoters attended and INGUAT hopes that as many as 100,000 tourists will go to Guatemala as a result of this meeting (Anonymous, 1982c).

Nonetheless, tourism based foreign revenue earnings continued to drop throughout 1982 (Anonymous, 1982c, e; *Travel Weekly*, 1981). Government efforts to create positive, safe images of Guatemala in the international media continued under the presidencies of Generals Rios Montt and Mejía Victores. For example, a 1984 *Miami Herald* article entitled "U.S. Says Tourist Spots in Guatemala are Safe to Visit" explained that U.S. Embassy in Guatemala had "toned down" its travel advisory because of a reduction of violence and "considerably improved" national security (Anonymous, 1984c; Simon, 1987:161-164). Yet one wonders how many tourists, rights advocacy groups or international observers found these convincing given the unyielding violence and repression (British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, 1984; CDHG, 1984; Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, 1985; Laughlin, 1984; Anonymous, 1982a, 1982d, 1984a; Nolan, 1985; Riding, 1982; Simons, 1982). Simon points out the irony of this contrast between tourism representation and street level reality:

An enlargement of the [Miami Herald] article hung between the INGUAT desk and the immigration counter at the Aurora airport in Guatemala City. While U.S. travel advisories were being modified, however, other local news did not support the Embassy's renewed optimism. In an August 12, 1984 press statement, the Association of University Students (AEU) denounced the "disappearance" and killing of sixty-four students that year. On October 29, 1984 Guatemalan dailies reported six deaths in seventy-two hours: ... [including university] dean [who was] machine-gunned at a gas station ... (Simon, 1987:161-164).

These reports and media stories of random violence against nationals and foreigners exposed the high level of insecurity that continued to exist. This press had damaging effects on INGUAT, whose leaders were literally "in bed" with the dictatorships. The use of police against tourists at a popular destination is particularly revealing:

In April 1984 This Week in Central America described an army search of foreign tourists at Panajachel's "Gringo Beach" in Sololá: "Guatemala's tourism promoters and hotel owners not only have to contend with a negative image abroad and an official U.S. travel advisory, but also with their own government, particularly the state Tourism Bureau...Last week...Bureau chief Yolanda Ordóñez de Monzón sent 150 armed members of the feared Treasury Policy to the resort of Panajachel on Lake Atitlán to arrest 'foreign delinquents.' The armed men, many of them in plainclothes, burst into hotels, ordering tourists to stay in their rooms while their belongings and documents were inspected. Other visitors were forced to stay on the beach or wherever they happened to be when the raid started...Despite the universal condemnation of the police offensive in Panajachel, there is little danger Mrs. Monzón will lose her job. Her husband is a former military academy classmate of the chief of state" (Simon, 1987:188).

It was not until 1985 that the situation changed when the combined forms of international pressure on the Mejía Victores government finally forced elections. Under the civilian president elected in 1985, Vinicio Cerezo, solidarity organizations allowed the tourism boycott to subside. Foreign travel to Guatemala increased rapidly from 1986 to 1987 by 14% and from 1987 to 1988

by another 23%. By this time, however, the Guatemalan tourism industry had turned from the U.S. market to pursue more elite European markets. The Italian and German markets were especially courted, perhaps not coincidentally because these countries had not issued travel warnings during the previous years.

The “frank and bitter” dismissals of tourism in cold war economics: the path from liberalism to neoliberal policies and strategies of tourism

Alvaro Arzú, INGUAT Director under Lucas García’s administration, repeatedly expressed “with frankness and bitterness” his pessimism and frustration over the Guatemalan tourism industry’s future. Arzú lamented not only the country’s continuing violence, but the ruling elite’s mentality vis à vis tourism. In contrast to the boycott’s transnational organizers, the governmental agencies that oversaw the industry viewed national tourism as a minor, secondary economic sector. In a 1980 newspaper interview headlined, “With frankness and bitterness,” Arzú discussed this irony:

With a certain degree of bitterness ... the Director of INGUAT noted that despite the fact that tourism is the third largest economic force in Guatemala, only after coffee and cotton, its importance has not yet penetrated government organizations which still considers tourism to be a complementary activity within the economy, and that, meanwhile ‘international organizations that are attacking the institutional apparatus of Guatemala, have recognized the importance of the industry, calling for a boycott against tourism, to which neither coffee or cotton is subjected (Anonymous, 1980b).

The land owning elite, whose power was based in traditional agricultural products such as coffee, cotton and sugar kept the country’s economy chained to export agro-industry via repressive, near slave labor system. The old 19th and early 20th century economic ideologies of liberalism prevented national policymakers from imagining, much less risking, alternative economies and diversification. Further, the idea of promoting and celebrating Maya peoples and cultures for tourism was outside of the cultural mentality of a society based on the repressive exploitation of this “minority”/subaltern group. National modernization sought to integrate the Indian and eradicate the cultural and racial heritage of pre-modern “barbarism,” not celebrate it. Similarly, the undeveloped forests, mountains and jungles could only be conceptualized as resources for industrial exploitation, not for tourist consumption. Thus, the ideological and de facto dismissal of tourism can be understood, in an ironic sense that only history can provide, as a yet another form of “embargo” of tourism but this time by the ruling elite who devoted so much energy to defending its agro-export industries and the racial stratification of society. In hindsight, Arzú was fighting three distinct forms of tourism boycotts: one purposefully organized by the IUF; the unavoidable embargo by the State Department, and a de facto and ideological rejection by the Guatemalan oligarchy itself.

Fighting against this Liberalist Cold War vision of tourism (Anonymous, 1981d), in his role as INGUAT Director (1978-1981) Arzú was a visionary who sought to initiate neoliberal economic strategies of tourism. At this historic height of Latin American militarization and the rise of Reagan era international politics, Arzú was unsuccessful and in 1981 left INGUAT for the

private sector (Anonymous, 1995). It would take two military dictatorships (1981-1986) and three civilian administrations (1986-1996) before Arzú’s vision of a neoliberal Guatemala would become common practice in the mid-1990s, when he himself became Guatemalan president (1996-2000).

In the post-military government period from mid-1980s, Guatemala’s tourism industry began to develop along “alternative” routes. Rejuvenating the social tourism initiative, Guatemala has increasingly packaged itself since the mid-1980s for educational, adventure, cultural, and ecological tourisms within the umbrella of sustainable and alternative paradigms. These political strategies began to be conceived and put into practice with the election of a civilian president in 1985 and gained further impulse by the *National Geographic Magazine* proposal for a *Mundo Maya* or World of the Maya tourism development project that would forge a unified network of cultural heritage destinations across five nations (Burtner, 2004; Castañeda, 1996, 2000; Garrett, 1989).

Tourism as “force for” or “effect of” peace?

Political instability crippled the tourism industry, as well as the economy as a whole. Only with a return to “peace,” that is, a demilitarized, stable civil society, could tourism be returned to operational mode. Tourism, thus, it seems, was not a causal force in creating peace but its after effect. Or, was it? While it would be preposterous to attribute direct determining capacity to tourism, it does seem, however, that the general embargo of tourism to Guatemala did indeed play a key role in the panoply of political tools used by the transnational network of rights and advocacy groups. The tourism embargo did contribute to the pressures that brought about transformations in Guatemala.

It is in the context of this delicate and tentative peace, Guatemalan tourism strategies could then be conceived for “normal” use to attain economic and social goals of development as outlined by Arzú and the *Proyecto Nacional*. Before taking power in 1986, the Christian Democratic Party charted out its neoliberal vision in a 1985 statement, the *Proyecto Nacional* (Cerezo & Carpio, 1985a, 1985b). This outlined strategies on how to valorize, protect, conserve, and develop the resources that the country did possess, presented a new agenda for the Guatemalan government, especially regarding tourism. The strategic plan signaled a transformation in attitude toward the Maya by clearly proclaiming a vision of national modernity premised on the integration of the Maya into the nation *with* their cultural difference. This integration was in stark contrast to solutions historically offered by Guatemalan and Latin American intellectuals that sought a resolution to “the problem of the Indian” through the elimination of cultural difference via total cultural assimilation or genocide and civil war.

Cultural heritage is an historical inheritance the generation/production of which began in the Pre-Colombian period and has continually/constantly grown with the advances/contributions of contemporary cultural creation. If Guatemala loses its cultural heritage, it loses a significant part of its identity, which is why it is important to conserve and protect all of the constituent elements of this heritage (Cerezo & Carpio, 1985b:76).

In this new agenda, tourism was situated as key element of a new economic development strategy. Yet, state planners continued to view tourism as a secondary issue of “culture” rather

than an industry or economic sector and to place it within the ideological category of cultural rather than economic programs (Cerezo & Carpio, 1985b:79). The Christian Democrats envisioned programs to increase tourism-related promotions, infrastructure, and services, including a political re-structuring of INGUAT. Through a revitalized tourism agency, the state would expand Guatemala’s foreign market, create international exchange programs, promote art exhibits, and increase domestic tourism. These goals would force major improvements in the country’s infrastructure (highways and roads) and communications networks (telecommunications in particular), as well as policies to support the growth of tourism businesses, information services, and lines of credit for viable projects (ibid). Thus, despite the ideological categorization of tourism as a “cultural” versus an “economic” issue, the government recognized the positive force of tourism development in order to attain the explicitly economic goals of increased GNP and increased foreign investment.

Elements of these neoliberal strategies, including initiatives related to the *Mundo Maya*, were implemented in different forms over the next twenty years. The basic agenda of increased privatization and decentralization, conservation and preservation, and the diversification of markets, first promoted by Arzú and further elaborated by the Christian Democrats, were embraced by both the public and private sectors. With far reaching implications, their neoliberal strategies, policies, and visions became instrumental in re-mapping the political, economic and social landscape and life of post-war Guatemala and the *Mundo Maya*.

Reflection on the future of the past

The politics of tourism have engaged tourism scholars of every disciplinary orientation since the inception of this field of study. Yet, every such approach has a distinct, if nonetheless overlapping, focus and conception of the forms of “tourism politics” that matter most (Matthews & Richter, 1991; Richter, 1983). Economists and political scientists began the study of tourism by analyzing the governmental policies and plans of nations to use tourism to forge economic and cultural modernization. Sometimes this entailed devastating critiques of the multiplier effect, trickle down theories, and related development models. Anthropologists began the study of tourism proclaiming tourism as a form of neocolonialism that creates dependency of developing countries, increases poverty in Third World nations, and corrupts and dis-authenticates native cultures via commodification (Greenwood, 1889; Nash, 1989; Nuñez, 1989). Ironically, in this case, the Guatemalan government viewed *not the presence* but the absence and *embargo of tourism as neocolonial hegemony!* Regardless of these origins in the study of tourism, anthropologists have sought to forge more nuanced analyses of the struggles to create, sustain and gain from tourism by asking about the diverse factions of contending local and regional actors, national institutions, and international capital (Chambers, 2000). Nonetheless, the anthropological tendency has been to keep the local as the basic unit of analysis even while tracking political actors and implications to more encompassing contexts of nation, state and transnational actors. Similarly, the political science and economic approaches have maintained government, both of nation and community levels, as the primary unit of analysis, which are then investigated in relation to larger world regions or smaller subnational regions. Politics is also tracked to the field of international agents, but the tendency is to primarily investigate only those

powerful corporate institutions, such as development banks, tourism trade organizations, and organizations of international law that have a high profile on the global arena.

This case study shows the importance of another level and categorical type of transnational agents, specifically rights advocacy groups and development NGOs that have played increasingly major roles in the contemporary era of globalization and postmodernism. Twenty-six years ago the significance and nature of the power of these political agents was not clearly understood. Certainly the Guatemalan government could not find appropriate responses to the tourism embargo, boycotts of other products, and correlated pressures in part because this enemy could not be identified and known. Today, there is a robust inquiry into the functioning of this capillary power and these organizations in terms of the Foucaultian concept of governmentality. Scholars of tourism politics must increasingly tap into this literature to forge new understandings and analyses of the intricate complexities of and diverse agents that enter the field of tourism. In so doing, one important result is that an understanding of tourism as strategy would become more central in tourism research. The conceptualization of tourism as strategy, as strategic, and most importantly as an ensemble of multiple contending strategies, can lead away from the too easy temptation to think and study tourism as if were a singular, coherent, and discrete entity. This study shows the heterogeneity of agents and factors that enter into the politics of tourism and illustrates the impossibility of understanding tourism as a simple, univocal, or determinative causal factor. Tourism was just as much a force as an effect of peace simply because there were and are many tourisms — that is, many conflicting and competing strategies for its development and practice. This might be the crucial focus of future study in the politics of tourism.

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ENDNOTES

¹ We would not be surprised if tourism that is based on visiting sites of ongoing war is actually a growing market sector. We obviously exclude this as a rare exception to our statement. As well, it makes no empirical and analytical sense to consider war-time journalism and humanitarian war/disaster relief as forms of tourism.

² All translations from Spanish language sources, including headlines and quoted text by authors. Author Burtner was provided access to a number of these primary sources that had been collected and archived in a non-systematic manner (e.g., newspaper clippings were often cut so as to eliminate page numbers, date, and even titles) by representatives of the IUF and INGUAT during research in the late 1980s.