

The Political Economy of the Transition from Fishing to Tourism, in Placencia, Belize

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Placencia, a coastal village in southern Belize, is currently undergoing a transition of its economic base from fishing to tourism. Drawing upon the framework of dependency theory using a qualitative and quantitative analysis, this paper examines Placencia's economic transition. As a fishing economy, the villagers procured a wide variety of marine resources mainly for their own consumption and a limited local market. The high price paid for lobster and conch for consumption in the United States led to a decade of profitable exploitation of these resources and the successful organization of a fishermen's cooperative, encouraged by the government. This success led to over fishing and attracted fishermen from other parts of Belize and poachers from Honduras and Guatemala. As profits from lobster and conch began to decline ever more sharply after 1990, villagers began to convert to tourist related enterprises, formal and informal. Using both field and secondary data from Belize Central America I attempt to analyze this transition from fishing to tourism.

Abstract in Spanish

Placencia, un pueblo costero del sur de Belice, actualmente esta cambiando su base económica de la pesca al turismo. Inspirada en la teoría de la dependencia y usando un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo este reporte examina el cambio económico de Placencia. Como una economía de pesca el pueblo obtiene una variedad amplia de recursos marinos principalmente para su consumo propio y un mercado local limitado. El alto precio de la langosta y el caracol que se paga en los Estados Unidos causó por una década explotación la lucrativa de estos recursos marinos y la exitosa organización de una cooperativa de pescadores aprobada por el gobierno. Este éxito provocó la pesca desmesurada y atrajo a pescadores de otras partes de Belice y pescadores foráneos de Guatemala y Honduras. Las ganancias de la langosta y el caracol empezaron a bajar más y más rápido después de 1990. El Pueblo empezó a tener negocios relacionados con el turismo, formal e informal. Usando información de

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campo y archivada de Belice America Central, intento analizar el cambio de la pesca al turismo. [Translated by Karl Stover]

This paper examines the political economy of the transition of fishing to tourism in Placencia, Belize. Belize is noted throughout the Caribbean for the success of its fishing cooperatives. Yet Placencia's cooperative is declining in production due to dependence on external markets, over exploitation of fishing grounds and the lack of a diversified economy of goods produced alongside the governmental priority for tourism as a form of development.

Dependency theory originated with economists and academics concerned with the economic failure in Latin America (Frank, 1979; dos Santos 1974). Andre Gunder Frank was one of the major contributors of the dependency position. He argues that the periods of merchant capitalism and colonialism forced specialization of production of Third World countries that was primarily export oriented and geared to the imperial powers needs. Even the third world elites are incorporated into this system. They are the intermediaries between the purchasers and the peasant producers. Frank argued that there is a "chain of dependency running down from the metropolises and satellites, that extends from the world metropolises down to the hacienda or rural merchant who are satellites of the local commercial metropolitan center but who in turn have peasants as their satellites" (Frank, 1967:32). Frank's theoretical framework on dependency and underdevelopment is helpful in understanding Belize on the surface. Several of Frank's concepts are of importance such as peripheral countries are capitalistic in nature and not pre-capitalistic and are a direct result of merchant capitalism. The development of the core causes the underdevelopment of the periphery by surplus flows to the core from the periphery through unequal market relations. These market relations not only consist of financial resources but also natural resources. Dependency theory yields little insight to how the transfer of surplus is exchanged from the periphery to the core. Frank's framework is linear in that he sees the exploitation from the core to the periphery as a single chain of events that are static in nature.

However this does not explain what happens at the local level and the mechanisms that facilitate the transfer of surplus value. In Belize there exists an informal and a formal sector of the work force. The informal sector consists of all income producing activities that form a coherent whole, not only for the household but for the economic systems survival. "The concept of informal sector thus encompasses all income producing activities outside formal sector wages and social security payments" (Portes, 1981:87).

The informal economy is not a result of spontaneous or undirected activities but the result of state intervention in the regulation of economic

activities. The informal economy develops and changes not as a result of intrinsic characteristics but from the social definition of state intervention. (Portes, 1989:32). The presence of the informal economy will vary across countries and localities and will be dependent upon historical circumstances. Thus any change in the regulated economy also imposes changes in the informal economy such that the informal opportunities are continually changing and reforming themselves as a direct result of world capitalistic accumulation.

Laclau (1971) points out that the crucial problem is to know how the surplus that is transferred is produced and whether there are any specific features of the productive system that limit its development. As he suggests, capitalistic enterprises in the third world countries may employ wage labor, yet these workers depend on other means of support such as animal husbandry and garden cultivation. Therefore capitalism unites with, rather than completely engulfs, the local social and economic system. While other sources of income may be intertwined with wage labor, the view of this paper is not one of the preservation of a traditional subsistence sector, residing along side or articulating (Laclau, 1971) with capitalism. Instead a modern feature of capital accumulation called the informal economy and arises as a direct result of capitalist penetration. The informal economy acts as a mechanism to hinder dissent by providing economic opportunities and aids family income. The United States' implementation of free one-way trade to the Caribbean has reoriented the region's trade. The core is dictating structural change in the region by funding technological solutions for development. The international promotion of tourism is affecting Belizeans such that, "Tourists are exposing many Belizeans to a foreign way of life. Many luxury products and foods are imported primarily for the benefit of tourists and expatriates, and Belizeans are then exposed to them" (Wilk, 1990:139). Private American investors who are responsible for some \$250 million total investment in Belize continue to play a key role in Belize's economy, particularly in the tourism sector.

TOURISM IN BELIZE

The Belize government is beginning to undertake new forms of economic development in order to integrate and diversify their economies. One of these forms of development is the promotion of international tourism that has grown drastically since the 1980's. The understanding of tourism as a form of development requires an appreciation of the historical forces that are responsible for the common characteristics of less developed countries. Stephen Britton asserts,

A poor country seeking to promote tourism as a means of generating foreign exchange, increasing employment opportunities, enhancing economic independence or promoting commercial involvement of poor sections of the community is likely to find the attainment of such goals impeded by this organization of the industry (Britton, 1996:156).

In the 1970's the Belizean government ignored tourism as an economic activity. The government of George Price with the People's United Party (PUP) which had been in power since the 1950's did not support American investment. In 1984 the United Democratic Party (UDP) came into power and argued for foreign investment (Sutherland, 1996). Tourist activity increased in the 1980's and "both the government and the leaders of Belizean society increasingly came to see tourism as an economic activity that would enhance the development of the country" (Dachary and Burne, 1991). Privatization was already established by the time the PUP regained power in 1989. The Belizean government through the impetus of the Caribbean Basin Initiative began to promote eco-tourism.

During the last several decades a number of studies have examined the impact of tourism development on the environment including bio-diversity, erosion, pollution and degradation of other natural resources, (Stonich, 1998; Miller and Aurong 1991; Bryant, 1992; Peet and Watts, 1993). In Belize tourism expanded at a fast rate. Belize became synonymous with eco-tourism in the 1980's (Patullo, 1996) thus the environment became objectified as a product for sale. Environmental degradation may emanate from erosion, sediment discharge due to site clearing, the lack of solid waste and treatment facilities, coastal zone destruction such as mangrove removal, beach deterioration and coral reef damage (Vega et al., 1993). These studies suggest that adverse environmental deterioration have negative consequences to all regardless of class, gender or ethnic affinities. Environmental degradation is identified with tourism. For example in Placencia and Siene Bight, Belize, increases in tourist arrivals have resulted in an increase in the number of lodging facilities for tourists. The changing landscape caused by the construction of tourist facilities such as land clearing, erosion, overextended septic systems, mangrove destruction has altered the appearance of the peninsula.

Belize's eco-tourism industry has not come without costs to the local populations. Many of the tourists who visit Belize stay at luxury hotels along the coastline. Nancy Lungren (1993) states approximately 70 to 90% of the country's freehold land is owned by foreigners and 65% of the members of the Belize Tourism Association are foreigners (McMinn and Cater, 1988). Tourism in Belize has created low-paying employment in hotels (McClaurin, 1996).

Since tourism markets are located in the developed countries and have direct contact with tourists they therefore control the flow of tourists. This relationship puts the tourist industry intermediaries between the tourist and the destination countries. Because the tourist industry arose out of the affluent middle classes of the rich countries, metropolitan companies have been able to dominate the control on tourist movements. A developing country seeking to secure foreign exchange, increasing employment opportunities and enhancing economic independence or trying to promote tourist involvement in poor communities may find their goals impeded.

The organizational structure of international tourism can be seen as a three tiered hierarchy (Britton, 1996). At the top are the developed market economies that control the transport, airlines, tour, hotel and tourism supplying companies. In the middle of this stratified system are the branch offices of the developed countries firms operating with the local tourism counterpart. This distinct type of social formation includes the capitalist or "modern" formal sector that is composed of monopolistic firms and linked to non-capitalist "traditional" subsistence sectors. At the base are the small-scale tourist enterprises of the destination country. The characteristics of peripheral social formations have a large impact on the way an industry such as tourism is integrated into the local community. The countries that make up the core and the periphery can not be seen as independent economies. The lesser-developed countries or periphery has its origins in a common historical experience of colonialism. The colonial empires imposed forms of production, organization and trading patterns, that of a peripheral capitalist economy (Amin, 1976). The economic organizations and political institutions of underdeveloped countries formation were designed to meet the needs of the colonial powers. Tourism inflicts tremendous changes on the local populations who eventually must adapt to feed, house and entertain the tourists.

Belize's economic performance is highly susceptible to external market changes. Although moderate growth has been achieved in recent years, the achievements are vulnerable to world commodity price fluctuations and continuation of preferential trading agreements especially with the U.S (cane sugar) and U.K. (bananas). Belize continues to rely on foreign trade with the United States as its number one trading partner. Total imports in 1999 totaled \$370 million while total exports were on \$183 million. In 1999, the U.S. accounted for 43% of Belize's total exports and provided 50% of all Belizean imports. Other major trading partners include the U.K European, Canada, Mexico and Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM member states). The United States is the largest provider of economic assistance to Belize contributing \$1.1 million various bilateral economic and military aid programs to Belize in 1999. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) closed its Belize

office in August 1996 after a 13 year program during which USAID provided \$110 million worth of development assistance to Belize. Private American investors who are responsible for some \$250 million total investments in Belize continue to play a key role in Belize's economy particularly in the tourism sector. Tourism attracts the most foreign direct investment although significant U.S investment also is found in energy, telecommunication and agriculture. A combination of several natural factors - climate, the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere, numerous islands, excellent fishing, safe waters for boating, jungle wildlife and Maya ruins support the thriving tourist industry. The development costs are high but the Government of Belize has designated tourism as its second priority after agriculture. Revenues from tourism have increased drastically over the years.

Table 1. Belize Tourist's Expenditures 1988-1998

<u>Year</u>	<u>Belize Million*</u>
1988	44.2
1989	58.8
1990	88.9
1991	89.5
1992	119.3
1993	138.5
1994	142.7
1995	154.1
1996	177.2
1997	176.0
1998	198.0

* \$1.00 Belize equals \$0.50 USD

Source: Travel and Tourism Statistics, Belize Tourism Board, 1998

It is apparent that Belize is dependent upon metropolitan areas for its sustainability. In 1998, 161,655 tourist visitors to Belize whereas in 1991, 77,970 tourists visited (Belize Tourism Board, 1998).

HISTORY

Belize gained independence from Britain on September 21, 1981 and Belize became a British colony in 1862. The direct control by Britain became more prominent and was facilitated by two factors. In the 1850's prices in the world market began to decrease for forestry commodities. The settlers who

previously dominated the economy of Belize fell into bankruptcy. These holdings were bought by several British firms and the indigenous power structure eroded. With the intensification of the war in the Yucatan and incursions by rebel Mayas, the settlers pushed for colony status.

While attempts were made by England to develop plantation crops, in the early 1930's the Depression halted all efforts at improvement. In the 1930's trade shifted from Britain to the United States. At this time more than half of the colony's imports, which consisted mostly of food, came from the United States. The United Kingdom exported only around 12 percent to British Honduras.

In 1936 and 1949 the British pound sterling was devalued, while the United States dollar remained at parity with the British Honduras dollar. Today although successful in exporting several products, mainly sugar, the land is still dominated by non-Belizeans. In 1985 Coca-Cola and two Texas millionaires attempted to purchase 700,000 acres of land in northwestern Belize, almost 12 percent of the country (Petch, 1986).

In hopes of transforming the economy, Belize has engaged in several other export industries. One of these is the industry of fishing. Organized around fishing cooperatives, this industry has brought foreign revenues to the country. With the formation of the fishing cooperatives, Belizeans have been able to play an important role in the economy. The formation of the fishing cooperatives improved the standard of living in the fishing villages. In 1988 marine products accounted for \$5.7 million U.S sugar accounted for \$35.5 million U.S., garments accounted for \$20 million U.S., and citrus accounted for \$17 million U.S. In 1990, marine products showed an increase and accounted for \$7.3 million U.S. The leading imports to Belize in 1989 and 1990 consist of food, machinery and manufactured goods. (U.S. Department of State, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

I used qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to investigate social change in Placencia, Belize. The primary advantage of using a qualitative ethnological analysis was that it revealed international processes and local sub-processes, such as the operation of an informal economy. Thus a qualitative approach provided insight into the international political economy and the policies implemented by the United States that cause underdevelopment, particularly the effects at the village level. However, simple quantitative analysis was also instrumental in documenting changes and trends in the prices of marine products, changes in membership of the fishermen's cooperative, and tourist activities.

The research was carried out in six field trips: December 1990-January 1991, June 1991, December 1991-January 1992, May 1992-June 1992, December 1992-January 1993 and December 1993-January 1994. The first two visits were to establish rapport in the village, whereas the latter visits consisted of archival research at governmental agencies in Belmopan and the Placencia Fishermen's Cooperative, participant observation, and unstructured interviews. Utilizing a snowball sampling technique, approximately 30 people were interviewed, ranging in age from 19 to 80 years of age. The occupations of the participants were diverse and included housewives; fishermen; tourists; senior citizens; waitresses; managers of hotels; bartenders; owners of restaurants and hotels; the owner of the market; and owners of tourist operations such as guides, shop owners and sports fishing businesses. In order to understand the experiences of the villagers, I conducted in-depth interviews lasting from one to several hours.

Because the field-work was carried out in six trips, rapport was already established before interviewing which enabled me to have more of a conversational tone in the interviews. This informality was instrumental in gaining significant information from the informants and allowed access to leads that provided further information pertaining to the informal economy.

RESEARCH SITE

Placencia lies in the southern part of Belize and is located on a peninsula that juts out into the Caribbean Sea. In the southern section of Belize the land rises from the coastal plain to the Maya Mountains. The southern region receives approximately 163 inches of rain a year. Ten to fifteen miles from the shore lay a coral ridge that extends all along the coastline. These coral islands along this inner reef are known as cayes. A few miles seaward of this chain, exists other coral ridges, the barrier reef, the largest coral reef in the Western Hemisphere.. The barrier reef, bays, lagoons, and offshore islands comprise the features of the environment in which the people of Placencia live. According to the 1992 census, of 282 people in Placencia, 231 are Creole, 21 are Caucasian, 11 are Garifuna, 7 are Mestizos, and 3 are Maya. The 1980 census reports the population of Placencia to be 334 therefore the 1992 census indicates a decrease in population and a decrease in average household size. However the number of dwellings in 1992 has increased by 10. According to the 2000 Census of Belize the population of Placencia has increased to 501 people.

Because little documented evidence for the origin of Placencia exists, I interviewed older members of the village to learn the village history. According to one of the oldest members of the village, the physical appearance was once very different. In the early 1900's Placencia had many large trees

which had to be cut down. When the first people came to Placencia the environment looked very different in that paths had to be cut because of the abundant vegetation. At this time there were four or five families in the village. The homes were constructed of thatch and wood and were much smaller. According to an informant, "in 1936 Placencia was really a fishing village. Men would go out to the cayes for two to three weeks, salt the fish, and then would sell the fish to Punta Gorda Stann Creek Town, and Sittee River." In sum, the people of Placencia always fished for their own consumption and a limited local market. But Placencia did not totally depend on fishing. Through animal husbandry, small-scale agriculture, and fishing, the villagers were able to combine income-producing activities. The women of Placencia have also been instrumental in the economic and historical development of the village. In an interview, a woman spoke of her mother and said, "Mom made cashew wine and guava jelly to sell, and also made coconut oil to sell." Other women contributed to the family income by making bread and light cake. Several of the elderly women of the village told me that in the past on occasion, they used to fish with their husbands. Today it is a rare exception for women to do this. With the formation of the fishing cooperative fishing became predominately a male activity

PLACENCIA FISHERMAN COOPERATIVE

The fishermen in Belize were first introduced to the cooperative movement in the early 1950's through the teachings of Father Marion Ganey a Jesuit Priest. Placencia's Producers Cooperative Society Ltd. began June 20, 1962. The fishermen of Placencia, with the formation of the Cooperative, were now able to take complete control of fishing in the village. It is also important to note that the fishermen's political activity began as early as the 1940's with the rise of nationalism, which hoped to secure a better life for all people of Belize. These actions are important because they represent a movement in class solidarity through the formation of the cooperative. Thus, with the industry in the fishermen's hands they were able to fight against quotas and extend seasonal limits for the high valued items.

In Placencia, a series of occurrences in terms of malfunctions in equipment, motors, or the ice machine lead to a loss of production. For example, one gentleman complained about not being able to get a crankshaft even though he had paid a percentage of the cost in advance. Since there were none available in Belize City, he had to wait until the next shipment arrived from abroad. In the fiscal year 1970-71, mistakes made during the installation of an ice-machine and the repairs incurred hurt the cooperative considerably because of having to purchase ice while the machine was out of order.

Malfunctions in equipment affected cooperative production in 1978, when shrimp showed a reduction due to engine failure and the lack of available parts. This resulted in a 40% loss in shrimp production, which amounted to \$97,000.

In 1987 a serious decline in production began and, according to the 1987 Annual Report attention needed to be brought to the serious decline in production especially in the higher priced items of lobster and conch. For example, the lobster catch in 1972 was 33,454 pounds and in 1991 it had been reduced to 12,389 pounds. The production of conch also declined. In 1976, 139,870 pounds of conch was caught whereas in 1991 there was only 21,389 pounds turned in to the cooperative. With the decline in production many of the fishermen turned to part-time producers. Furthermore, the report pointed out that some of the members were engaged in other types of businesses other than producing for the Society (Placencia Producer's Cooperative Annual Report, 1987). Again in 1990 the Cooperative was not able to produce ice due to a malfunction in the ice machine. At the 1985 Annual meeting of the Placencia Fisherman Cooperative, Assad Shoman, Minister of Health, Housing, and Cooperatives, proposed that people of Placencia think of the industry of tourism as a possible enterprise by utilizing the cooperative in the tourist industry (Placencia-Producers Cooperative Society Annual Report, 1985). Production levels are not only affected by the lack of a national diversified economy but also by the local fishermen entering into illegal trade, poachers and the lack of seasonal limits. Many of the villagers blame the decline in production to local fishermen entering into illegal trade and alien poachers. The theft of lobsters from traps is not unique to Placencia (Craig, 1966, Sutherland, 1986, King, 1997) found this to be a common problem in Caye Caulker. Fears abound that Belize will be "fished out," as has already occurred in many Caribbean countries. According to several informants, the "over-fishing reality" of the reefs has facilitated the change of economic structure toward one of tourism. These fears are not unwarranted. As one informant explained, "the depletion of the fish is the biggest social change in Placencia." With the specialization of fishing, incomes increased which enabled the villagers to venture into other economic activities such as tourism.

Placencia is not alone in this overarching decline in the procurement of marine resources. The Northern Fishermen's Cooperative Society in Caye Caulker has also witnessed a decline in marine production. Recent changes in the transfer of territories and the growth of tourism development are affecting the cooperative's resilience (King, 1997). Thus the push for tourism at the national level and the over fishing has led to tourism as the main economic activity.

TOURISM IN PLACENCIA

Tourists began arriving in the 1970's and early 1980's but were the hippie-back type. However in the 1980's tourism began to expand throughout Belize and this expansion was felt in Placencia. As tourists arrive and bring more and more tourists dollars to Belize, the state begins to formalize the new tourist economy, by bringing the industry under the authority of the state through taxation. In the early 1980's to accommodate tourist's interests laws were enacted through the village council. One of these laws forbids pigs in the village proper because tourists found the pigs annoying. The state laws have brought about tighter controls on businesses that serve alcoholic beverages. Thus to be an official tourist establishment a business must have toilet facilities with some form of septic system. Women and men began to diversify their sources of income by catering to tourists and utilizing the informal economy. Because tourism was a new form of economic activity for the country of Belize there was little enforcement of the regulations of the industry. For example several women in the village were able to enter the formal economy by creating enough capital to start small-scale businesses. Before entering the formal economy women provided services through informal channels such as providing laundry services for tourists, others prepared meals, while others used their knowledge of the village to send tourists out to the cayes for an overnight stay accompanied by one of the fisherman in the village. In Placencia the number of hotels has increased drastically from 10 in 1988 to 49 in 1998. The hotels are small and none have over 21 rooms. In Placencia 44 hotels contain 1-10 rooms and 4 hotels contain 11-20 rooms. This is significant in that the building of small-scale hotels was first initiated by entering into the informal economy. Another important factor with the change from fishing to tourism is the entrance of women into the formal work place. Before the formation of the cooperative women would many times help their husbands fish by going out to the cayes for several weeks and salt drying the marine products. However with the formation of the fishermen's cooperative fishing, was only a male activity. With the decline of the fishing cooperative both men and women entered the informal economy. Women entered the informal in greater numbers than men because most of the tourist needs were met by domestic duties.

With the decline in marine resources as stated by an informant, "difference is now women have to work either in the informal sector or formal sector. When Coop dropped off, women took to working." Some of the women work in restaurants waiting tables or perform domestic duties in one of the small hotels. Others work as cooks and bartenders.

In 1983 when the Placencia market began the road did not exist. In 1986 the road was built from the top of the peninsula to Placencia. With the completion of the road building supplies such as steel, cement blocks and lumber are brought to the village. The road today is rudimentary at best and during the rainy seasons the fill is washed out and the potholes are immense. According to the owner of the market, the purchase of building materials has increased. Access to building supplies facilitated the informal economy. Because of the access to construction materials men were able to add rooms to their homes or small bungalows for overnight stays by tourists. These establishments at this time were not considered hotels thus they acted as a form of extra income allowing families or individuals to gain enough capital to enter the formal tourist industry. Currently several families in the village are also enclosing the space under their houses to provide rooms for tourists. The men tend to perform the construction of the enclosures whereas the women after completion of the rooms tend to the cleaning and general maintenance. Some Placencians build their own homes and also are adding small cottages to their property for tourists. These small entrepreneurial ventures are a practical and a necessary part of the village economy. The ventures have permitted the villagers to diversify their economic activities, encompassing both fishing and tourism.

Some women and men have been able to enter the formal sector by first engaging in informal economic activities. Women participated in an informal economy by washing clothes and preparing meals for tourists outside of the formalized channels. The informal economy allowed some men and women to create enough capital to be able to enter into the formal tourist industry. For example, one woman in the village began by washing clothes, then starting baking cakes for tourists. Through the construction efforts of her husband she now has entered into a formal restaurant and bakery that caters to tourists. Not all residents of the village have engaged in informal economic activities. After tourism came under the control of the state men became tour guides and took tourists out fishing.

According to many of the villagers, tourism is believed to be a more reliable source of income. In fishing many variables can affect the size of the catch, such as over-fishing, poaching, weather, and migration patterns. Placencians are involved in sports fishing; they serve as guides for nature trips and to Maya ruins; they rent rooms and boats; they run restaurants; they wash clothes, clean rooms, and feed tourists; they are taxi drivers; and many combine several of these activities either formally or informally. With tourism, they believe, one is guaranteed a day's salary by taking tourists out on the cayes, sports fishing, or for a casual dive. While there may be immediate gains, the long-term financial prospects could be bleak. The main attractions are

sports fishing and the coral reefs. Laughing Bird Caye was designated a national park, and already there is talk of damage to the reef because of the lack of funding to appoint a person to maintain and enforce proper care of the reef.

Douglas Pearce, a geographer who conducted a study of tourist development in Belize, states that much of the tourist activity in Belize will be centered in San Pedro. In view of the gradual insertion of tourism into the community and of the strength of the local fishing economy, San Pedranos have been able to participate in the new activity and to adapt successfully to the influx of visitors (Pearce, 1984:301). However, from interviews in Placencia, San Pedro is held as an example of what not to do in regard to tourism. Many of the villagers of San Pedro have sold the beachfront property to foreigners and now are relegated service jobs within the community. According to Placencians, "People saw what happened in San Pedro and learned," that is they learned to hold on to their beachfront property. However, while most of the beachfront property in Placencia is owned by Belizeans, to the north of the peninsula beach front property is almost exclusively owned by Americans. As recently stated by a woman from Placencia,

I have recently flown over my home in Placencia and have noticed that every inch of coast line is owned by foreign-owned tourist lodges. Some charge \$200 US a night. They have their boats; their own vehicles; their workers; and the bookings, along with mega-bucks, all in the U.S.A. while in Placencia get not benefit from this at all. Outside of the village, it will soon be impossible to get down to sea because all the land will be owned by foreigners. They are not interested in the southern highway but are interested in the seashore (Blazer, 2000).

Another concern for Placencians is the drug use in the village by tourists and villagers. With more tourists visiting Placencia, the market for drugs has increased and affected the inhabitants of the village. Crime in the village has recently become a problem, and many villagers attribute this to the opening of the road. Despite some of the negative effects of tourism noted above in Placencia, the tourist host encounter is one of genuine and sincere relations with villagers for extended periods. For the most part, tourists and hosts come face to face to exchange information and ideas. It is also commonplace for them to eat, dance, and socialize with one another in the village. As Placencia's tourist industry grows this may change, but at present, according to tourists, this close tourist-host encounter is one of the advantages to vacationing in the village.

The interaction between the two cultures, the foreign and the local, lead to conflicts. Conflicts occur at the social, cultural and economic levels. There are several episodes that are related to these conflicts. During one of my stays, a man from the United States who visited Placencia several times a year, was pursuing the possibility of purchasing a caye. Unfortunately his boat was found wrecked at sea. On the surface, Placencian's transition to tourism seems to be positive, yet there is resistance as indicated in a song by one of the villagers.

We no giving up this country
 We no giving up this land
 We no giving up the village

Not a grain of sand.
 Not one coconut.
 Not one ripe mango.
 Not one cashew.
 Not a blade of grass.

Somebody hear me sing.
 Somebody hear me shout.
 Somebody hear me say.
 Somebody hear me cry.

Not one silk snapper.
 Not one barracuda.
 Not one sheep head.
 Not even a black snapper.

Resistance has been displayed in forms other than songs. There are various stories circulating in the village about resistance to tourism. The stories include those of outsiders who have found their boats adrift or wrecked upon a coral bed. Tourism has been occurring in Placencia for a long time, yet it has only been recently that tourism competed with fishing as a primary economic activity. Many villagers view tourism in a positive light and contend it is a more reliable means of income, yet there is both conscious and unconscious resistance to it as well.

In conclusion, several actors are facilitating Placencia's transition from a fishing economy to one of tourism. First on the national level tourism or "eco-tourism" is being promoted as an alternate form of development. Second the specialization of high priced products geared to the international market

and the over-exploitation of these products. And third, the informal economy allowing the people of Placencia to enter the tourism industry. From the international level, to the state level, to the village level, changes occur yet all are tied to the other through the world political and economic system.

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