



The Trouble with Tourism

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Abstract: The hegemonic view of tourism is as a global panacea for struggling peoples, environments and economies (Smith and Brent 2001). This article begins by arguing that increasing worldwide risks from human-induced climate change fundamentally alter the veracity of this prediction claim. As one of the world's largest industries, tourism is also one of the largest emitters of carbon, primarily from air transport. Far from standing apart from our carbon-dependent economy, tourism is quite profoundly a creation of that economy and cannot be an antidote to the very stuff of which it is made. Further, to the extent that tourism functions as escape from the ills of petroleum-driven life, it detracts critical attention and investment from home places and communities. The article concludes with a proposition for an alternative futures forecast based on bioregional tourism, or locavism. Characteristics of a locavist approach include the de-growth of the high-carbon, distant travel model of tourism and replacement with a low-carbon model that emphasizes local destinations, short distances, lower-carbon transport modes, and capital investment (both financial and social) in local communities.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; locavist; locavism; climate change; carbon emissions; place attachment; bioregionalism.

Introduction

The time has come to rethink tourism. A few years ago this idea seemed heretical. The hegemonic view of tourism has long been that of a sustainable industry providing critical stimulus to struggling local economies (Lumsdon and Peeters 2009). The tourism sector is generally regarded as a green island in the polluted sea of our post-industrial economy; a place we can turn to escape from what William Cronon (1996: 69) calls 'our own too-muchness'. Tourism is presented as both an alternative to and an escape from the excesses of modernity. It connects us through mutual experience and brings much

needed economic opportunities to underdeveloped regions. It is an expression of basic human needs for exploration and discovery.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) positions travel and tourism as an indispensable driver of economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental sustainability. Travel improves health, builds relationships, makes us smarter and more productive at work, builds cross-cultural understanding, enriches education, and promotes peace (UNWTO 2013). What could be more sustainable than an industry where the primary resource

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consumed is experience and the primary goods produced are memories, cultural understanding, and ecological awareness?

From a sustainability perspective, tourism is viewed as a renewable resource that, if cared for properly, can be utilized indefinitely. Unlike primary resources such as coal and minerals, tourism is not finite. A visit to the ocean does not diminish it for the next tourist, and mountains remains in place no matter how many tourists view them (Tarlow 2010). Moreover, tourism is a resource that cannot be shipped offshore. The basic assumption is that tourism is a 'natural institution' (Korstanje 2010) and some even argue it is a basic human right (Dubois and Ceron 2006; UNEP 1993). Viewed this way, tourism has the potential to transform our economy and our minds and lead us into a sustainable, peaceful future.

But does it? The more one looks at it, the more it becomes apparent that tourism is not what it seems. Far from being one of a few industries that stand apart from the oil-dependent economy, tourism is quite profoundly a creation of that economy—and our globalized culture at this unique moment in history. Tourism is not a carbon-neutral silver bullet, nor does the tourism experience provide refuge from high consumption lifestyles. Rather, it is a product of carbon-dependent civilizations and thus cannot serve as an antidote to the very stuff of which it is made.

Tourism hides its unsustainability behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it appears so sustainable. We too easily imagine that tourism as the embodiment of sustainability, when in reality it may represent unrealized hopes and desires for the world we want to live in, the

environments we want to inhabit, and economy we want to participate in. We therefore presume that tourism can be a solution, without facing the fact that tourism itself is a substantial part of the problem.

It is not the intent of this paper to challenge the many benefits that accrue from travel and tourism, which certainly are not trivial and are fully conceded here. Nor is the aim to debate the local social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism. Warner (2009), Hall and Lew (2009), and others have comprehensively described these impacts: air, water, and noise pollution; habitat loss from airport and auto infrastructure; spread of infectious disease; degradation of local destination environments and culture; and economic distortions from commercial aviation and oil subsidies. Rather it is argued that in the age of anthropogenic, or human-induced¹ climate change, these arguments and debates are eclipsed and made moot by the significant role of tourism in that change. We can no longer situate the industry based solely on its many positive contributions while ignoring its profound climate impacts (Lumsdon and Peeters 2009). This will require a fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the entire tourism production system.

To make this case, this paper draws several connections to the ontological futures studies classification system described by Bergman et al. (2010). Their classification divides statements about future events or states into four forecast types: prediction, science fiction, prognosis and utopia/dystopia. This paper draws upon the prediction and utopia/dystopia frames to understand tourism in its current and potential future states. Bergman et al. state that prediction forecasts include both truth claims, which posit some

futures forecast (represented as 'T'), and explanatory claims, which describe the causal mechanisms behind such a future (represented as 'E'). The conventional view of tourism in the academic and industry literature is a prediction forecast, in that tourism functions as a causal mechanism leading to a more sustainable future. We use a climate change lens to challenge the veracity of both the 'T' and 'E' claims behind this prediction forecast. We argue that neither the 'T' nor 'E' claims are valid and that tourism, as currently practiced, more accurately presents a utopian forecast. We then posit an alternative prediction forecast in which society transitions from peak-oil tourism to locavism, whereby locavists travel closer to home and invest locally in their communities with money, time and personal energy.

The discussion has been divided into four parts. Part I discusses the exuberance with which the world came to embrace tourism and travel, and why it is difficult to accept its role in undermining the planet's long-term sustainability. It traces the evolution of travel as a product of carbon-based industrialization and a 'theology of technological reception' (Warner 2009: 553). Part II describes the extent of climate change caused by the modern travel industry. Part III examines the problem of export leakage from tourism, not only in terms of currency, but also in social capital lost from local communities. Finally discussion segues into a concluding section that posits a possible alternative future for tourism and travel.

Deconstructing Tourism

To begin rethinking tourism, we must first recognize that it is a socially constructed phenomenon (Cohen and Kennedy 2013); a societal artifact at this unique moment in history. Definitions of the suffix '-ism' include

'belief' or 'ideology'. Within this belief comes a set of rosy tourism forecasts. By critiquing the truth claims and explanatory claims that comprise these forecasts, we can begin the difficult process of reimagining, remaking, and re-believing in a different tourism future.

The modern tourist experience and tourism industry are relatively new socio-economic inventions. While there is some debate over the origins (Houlot 1961; Leiper 1983; Korstanje 2010), the term tourism is rooted in the Latin *tornare*, 'to polish, round off, fashion, turn on a lathe' (Harper 2013) or the Ancient Saxon *torn*, to travel in a circular direction (Korstanje 2010). The Old French word *tour* emerged as a noun in the 14th century and was not used as a verb until the mid-18th century. The word *tourist* emerged in the 1780s and the word *tourism* in 1811 (Harper 2013).

Why did it take so long for the tourism phenomenon to emerge? The conventional view of tourism's history is that of an emerging western cultural construction. While Towner (1995) and others have compellingly argued that this western-centric, 'colonial' view of tourism history requires considerable revision, it is nonetheless enlightening to look at how tourism is conceived through this cultural lens. From this perspective, tourism history is the story of how an elite upper class developed a new form of human experience based on travel to prestigious destinations. The story begins with the leisured classes of the Classical World, re-emerges again in the Enlightenment, and reaches a zenith with the Grand Tours of the 17th and 18th centuries (Towner 1985; 1995). It continues with the industrial revolution, technological innovation, the growing affluence of the middle class, and the diffusion of tourism down the social ladder. The narrative

culminates with the emergence of mass tourism occurring within a hyper-connected, hyper-mobile global economy.

Several elements combine to form our current construction of tourism. The first is physical displacement, or freely chosen movement away from one's usual environment (as opposed to forced migration), followed by the cyclical return and reintegration with one's homeplace (Korstanje 2010). Provincial and sectional thinking have long presented powerful political and psychological barriers to this departure-return cycle. Other places were seen as dangerous, unhealthy, evil and immoral, and travellers to these areas risked illness, death and moral depravity. Returning travellers were viewed with mistrust, as communities feared the corruptive influence of their worldly ways. During the Middle Ages, for instance, there were few forms of sanctioned tourism and religious pilgrims' holiday – or holy day – constituted the only justifiable form of leisure travel (Goeldner and Ritchie 2012).

In this narrative, certain socio-psychological forces join to overcome these barriers. First, justification for travel is strongly rooted in the Judeo-Christian concepts of betterment through rest and rejuvenation (Korstanje 2010). Stated as truth (T) and explanatory (E) claims, travel produces individual and societal betterment (T) through rest and rejuvenation (E). Second, travel may satisfy basic human needs for discovery, exploration (Bowlby 1977), autonomy, competence, relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2000), and optimal arousal (Ellis 1973). Restated epistemologically, travel produces arousal and competence (T) via novelty (E). Some scholars argue that prestige and social emulation (E), with the attendant

desire for relatedness and upgraded social status (T), are also powerful drivers of touristic behaviour (Dos Santos 2005).

Yet the desire for travel is insufficient for a full conception of tourism. Obviously, tourists require destinations. Destination communities must be willing to conceive themselves as 'places in play' by constructing their identities as tourism destinations, and then package and promote those products to outsiders (Sheller and Urry 2004). Various socio-economic institutions then facilitate this tourist/destination relationship. The most recognizable examples of these institutions include transportation infrastructure, food and lodging systems, communications networks, methods of monetary exchange, and security apparatus. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution, entrepreneurs, innovators, and technology development, particularly in transportation, have played key roles in all aspects of the tourism system (Burkart and Medlik 1974; Towner 1995).

The result is a heroic narrative of tourism industry development whereby social goods result from touristic experiences (T) produced by highly evolved systems of economic actors (E). Tourism also contributes to nature conservation (T) through both financial (e.g., tourist spending) and social (e.g., education, awareness, connection to place) capital (E). In this narrative, tourism is presented as apart and different from other industries. The social and environmental impacts are generally portrayed as largely positive, while the negatives are glossed over (Hall and Lew 2009).

The Impact of Tourism on Climate Change

In our post-industrial globalized society, tourism has become one of the world's largest and most rapidly expanding industries,

contributing US \$6.6 trillion in GDP, 260 million jobs, US \$760 billion in investment, and US \$1.2 trillion in exports in 2012 alone (UNWTO 2013). This represents a 9.7% direct and 16.6% indirect share of global GDP, 1 in 11 jobs, 5% of investment and 5% of exports. More money, time, people, equipment, and energy consumption are involved in tourism than any other single industry, surpassing even the oil and automotive industries. If tourism were a country, it would be the third largest economy on the planet after the U.S. and China. In 2011, there were an estimated 983 million international travellers. This number is expected to exceed one billion by 2020 and reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO 2013).

Two technological innovations have made this growth possible: the development of commercial jet travel and the automobile. Virtually all of the nearly one billion annual international visitors, and a significant proportion of domestic visitors, travel by jet air transport. Once they arrive at their destination, automobiles allow them to move with a high degree of autonomy. Together these two forms of transport provide a level of mobility never before known in human history.

Herein lies the first major trouble with tourism. Tourism is, by definition, displacement away from home (UNWTO 2014). Displacement requires motion. The first law of motion tells us that travel requires force, or energy. Tourism travel is almost completely dependent on fossil fuel energy sources, which produce carbon emissions.

The International Energy Agency (IEA 2013) estimates that humans annually consume 460 quadrillion BTUs (quad) of energy resources, of which 36% (170 quad)

come from petroleum (see Figure 1). Of the total petroleum resources consumed, 60% (102 quad) power the world's transportation system (Alekkett 2008). Over 94% of the energy used in transportation comes from petroleum; evidence of the global reach of combustion engine transport technology.

In order to realistically evaluate tourism and predict its consequences, we must determine how much of this transportation is attributable to tourism. While figures are difficult to ascertain, the best estimates appear to range from 20% to 30%. For instance, of the nearly 3 billion airline trips taken annually, nearly a third are tourism related (WTTC 2011). Tourism is responsible for over 5% of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with over 80% of those emissions attributable to transportation (UNWTO-UNEP 2008). Aviation is by far the largest contributor to tourism emissions, accounting for 40% of CO₂ emissions globally and 75% of radiative forcing² (UNWTO-UNEP 2008). In domestic tourism, aviation is also the single largest contributor to emissions (Becken 2002; Gössling et al. 2002). Without petroleum, transportation systems would collapse and tourism would not exist in its current form.

To illustrate these large-scale impacts, it may be helpful to evaluate them at the traveler-level, or individual carbon footprint scale. A typical economy-class London to New York round trip passenger, for instance, produces about 715 kg of CO₂. When the high altitude 'climatic forcing' effect is taken into account, this is equivalent to 1,917 kg of CO₂ per passenger (Nevins 2010). The distribution of these impacts is grossly skewed toward developed world countries. While most of the world's population lives within a 'fair share ecological footprint,' (Vale and Vale

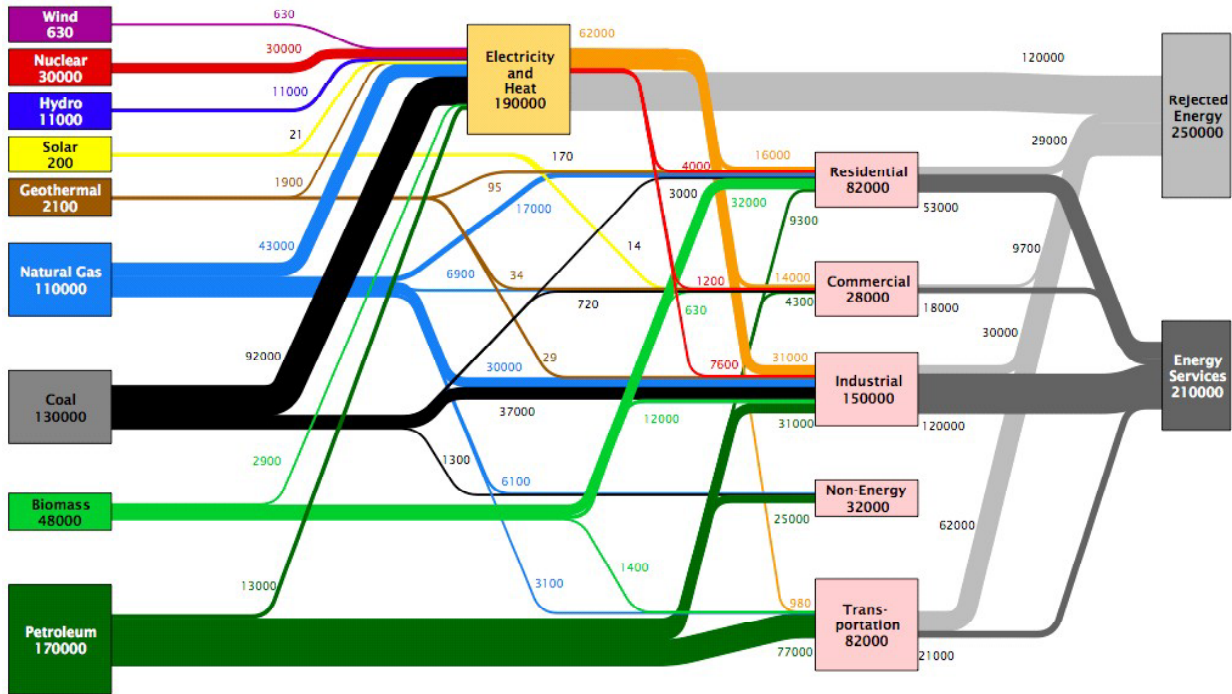


Figure 1. World Energy Flow Chart, 2007

Source: Smith et al. 2011

Note: Data is based on International Energy Agency's Extended World Energy Balances. All quantities are rounded to 2 significant digits and annual flows of less than 0.05 PJ are not included. Totals may not equal sum of flows due to statistical differences. Domestic supply includes changes in stocks. Further detail on how all flows are calculated can be found at <http://flowcharts.llnl.gov>.

2013), inhabitants of developed countries consume considerably more. Put in perspective, a one passenger trip above emits more carbon than that person will emit with their car in an entire year (CACC 2013), and more than a person in a developing country will emit in a lifetime (UNFCCC 2013). While long-haul travel accounts for only about 3% of all tourist trips, it contributes over 17% to global tourism emissions (UNWTO-UNEP 2008).

Given this near complete oil dependence, is it realistic to think that tourism can be decarbonized? The literature is replete with hopeful predictions based primarily on technological innovations that will reduce

carbon emissions without any fundamental changes to the industry. While we recognize this possibility, it is unlikely in the foreseeable future for two reasons. First, transportation is highly dependent on dense liquid fuels, particularly for air transport. There are currently no viable alternatives to petroleum to supply these liquid fuel needs demands (see Figure 1). Advances in renewable energy development to date have mostly occurred on the electricity production side, which holds promise for land-based transport (cars and trains) but does little to improve commercial aviation. Drop-in biofuel replacements for petroleum remain largely in the research and development phase and

currently represent an infinitesimal share of total transportation fuel consumption. Second, tourism's projected growth, combined with its ever-increasing energy-intensity, means that tourism-based petroleum consumption is increasing at a much faster rate than are gains from efficiencies and alternative energy source development (Bows et al. 2009; Gössling 2009).

While EU countries in particular have agreed to cut GHG emissions, this goal seems unrealistic given these technological constraints and global market forces. Current evidence suggests that tourism related energy use, and resulting GHG emissions, will continue to increase as people travel more frequently, over longer distances, and by the least sustainable modes of transport (Lumsdon and Peeters 2009; Peeters 2007).

The problem with tourism is that it quietly replicates the unsustainability that it is supposed to free us from. Tourism discourse gives the false impression that tourists, as economic and ecological actors, are behaving sustainably. It gives the illusion of participating in sustainable activities wherein pleasure can be gained without impact. This then is the central paradox of tourism: while appearing highly beneficial on local and regional economic and ecological levels, tourism poses one of the greatest threats to global climate.

The Fallacy of Tourism Development

Local economies are often described as 'leaky buckets' where the bucket represents the local region. Money circulates within the bucket, as well as flowing in and out (Cunningham 2011). Tourists pour currency into the bucket, while 'leaks' occur when money escapes the community. 'Leakage' is

spending captured by multinational corporations and large non-local firms, rather than by local communities. This is particularly a problem in developing countries and small communities where locally-owned tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped. Leakage estimates exceed 95% in some developing countries, and the overall developing country average is between 40% and 50% (UNEP 2013).

Local economic development generally focuses on attracting tourists to ensure that money continually flows into the bucket. Yet, continuously filling the bucket is not the only economic development policy option. Focus can also be placed on plugging the leakage of capital from the system. Often overlooked is the converse negative 'import effect' on home economies when local residents leave their communities and make expenditures as tourists in other locales. The 'Buy Local' and 'local food' movements are examples of 'import substitution' strategies aimed at plugging leaks in the bucket (Norberg-Hodge et al. 2002). In the case of tourism, this means keeping residents, and their spending, close to home.

In addition to currency leakage from local economies, social capital may also be lost. Social capital leakage occurs when residents spend their time and energy elsewhere. Tourism functions as a form of relief from the ills of urban-industrial civilization. As such it offers psychological opportunities to escape reality and day-to-day responsibilities, and to 'reinvent' oneself elsewhere. From this perspective, tourists may occupy homeplaces while holding back some part of themselves – what is often imagined as the 'best' part – for idealized 'other' places that will (hopefully) be visited. In imagining that the true self can be found

and rejuvenated in 'other' places, something is stolen from people's homeplaces. Idealizing distant tourist destinations too often results in discounting the environments in which we actually live and the places that, for better or worse, we call home (Cronon 1996).

The irony of tourism is that it leads to social disinvestment in home communities while simultaneously exacerbating a global crisis. It seems unlikely that either the money or energy invested in distant places significantly helps those destinations, while at the same time critical social capital is lost from home communities. The growth in service tourism has ironically encouraged people to travel to distant lands at the expense of local needs. Thus if a traveller genuinely wishes to 'help' a distant group of people or support their economy, staying home and sending money to reputable development organizations in those areas might be a more effective option.

Tourism is also touted as a panacea for issues afflicting indigenous peoples, such as environmental degradation, poverty, and loss of traditional lifestyles. In reality, this practice often introduces as many issues as it seeks to solve. In Ecuador and Belize for instance, tourism has protected some indigenous areas from development for oil production (Gould 1999). Ironically, the need for this oil comes in part from tourism demand. Moreover, indigenous tourism can introduce an array of social, economic, and environmental issues including economic and social stratification, alteration of traditional cultural practices, and out-migration (Butler and Hinch 2007).

Beyond the unjustifiable climate impacts, the second major trouble with tourism is that it encourages indifference and detachment from our homeplaces, everyday experiences, and local cultures. Identification

with and attachment to place is developed through repeated visitation and positive experiences in a place, particularly in childhood and early development (Morgan 2010). Place attachment in turn leads to pro-community and pro-environmental behaviours and the desire to protect specific, often local, places (e.g., Kyle et al. 2004). Tourism to distant places disrupts local place attachment by privileging the time and energy spent on some places, usually exotic distant places, at the expense of others. By fetishizing 'other' places, tourism encourages us to set unrealistic standards of what constitutes a 'good place'. Often tourism discourses suggest that home places are too plain, too domesticated, or too 'ordinary' to deserve our full attention. When local places lack our full attention, they 'underperform' or fall short of expectations, thus initiating a cycle of disinvestment and escapism. In its siren song of escape, its beguiling mask of sustainability, and in the comfort that we are doing good for destinations we visit, tourism in its current form poses a serious threat not only to global sustainability, but also to the sustainability of our homeplaces.

Reimagining Tourism: Locavism

Based on the Bergman et al. (2010) forecast framework, if we stay the course, oil-dependent tourism (E) will intensify both the severity of climate change and disinvestment in home communities (T). The question then is what might be a viable alternative forecast. Bergman et al. point out that forecast can be useful tools for the 'making of a better society.' Can we devise a set of truth and explanatory claims that point us to a more optimistic future?

Today sustainability generally, and climate change specifically, are central topics in tourism policy and futures forecasting

(e.g., Hall and Lew 2009). The extent of climate change impacts has been thoroughly described (e.g., Gössling 2002; Gössling and Hall 2006) and copious statements of concern and declarations of action have been developed by international organizations and tourism trade associations. The Group on International Aviation and Climate Change (GIACC), as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process, has adopted an aspirational goal of regular improvements in transport fuel efficiency (GIACC 2009). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) also adopted a commitment, endorsed by 40 of the world's largest travel and tourism companies, to cut carbon emissions in half by 2035 (WTTC 2009). Projects have been launched to promote investments in energy efficiency and to reduce tourists' carbon footprint. Policy changes have been proposed that focus on supply-side commitments from airlines, destinations, cruise ship lines, tour agencies and operators, as well as national and local governments (Lumsdon and Peters 2009).

Yet, virtually nothing has changed as a result of this top-down policy approach, except that political disagreements have deepened between developed and developing countries, and amongst developed countries, over the need for collective action, what action to take, and who should act. The prevalent argument is that the growth of the travel industry, particularly in the fast-growing developing world, must not be constrained. Proposed actions that lead to specific obligations on nations or the private sector have been ruled out, while developing countries continue to insist on different treatment. Meaningful change is unlikely due to a combination of forces including: inherent unpredictability; long time frames; lack of tangible consequences or clearly identifiable

villains; credibility issues; vested interests; and cost implications in an era of chronic economic uncertainty (Weaver 2011).

The calls for action by advocacy groups are also problematic in that they demand tremendous GHG emission reductions, without confronting the profound changes in behaviour necessary to meet these reductions. It is one thing to call for a 40% reduction in emissions based on a 1990 (Kyoto base year) standard (see Transport and Environment 2013). It is quite another to envision and implement the social changes necessary for this to occur.

Epistemologically, both the top down policy and advocacy approaches function as prognoses, in that they make truth claims (future reductions in carbon emissions) without linking them to viable explanatory claims that describe the causal mechanisms by which to achieve these truth claim. Achieving carbon reduction targets requires a worldview shift and wide-scale behaviour change by hundreds of millions of relatively affluent travellers. Mechanisms that will catalyze such a shift in worldview and behaviour are necessary for the forecast to be a viable prediction.

The first step in making a viable explanatory claim is to envision a tourism development model free from carbon-dependent travel. This vision emphasizes bottom-up behaviour change rather than policy interventions. It focuses on consumer awareness and activism to further the transition to slow consumption and *Décroissance* (degrowth) (Hall 2009). Specifically, this reimagining would begin with a local focus on long-term investments in home places rather than romanticized far-away places. The veneration of distant exotic places needs to be transferred to places closer

to home.

Such a transition requires the acknowledgment of the full range of tourism impacts, and becoming more self-aware and self-critical of our own actions (Hall 2009). Tourism is problematic only if we imagine that experiences of wonder and adventure are limited to remote, far-away places. Breaking the oil dependence that haunts tourism will only occur when local places are considered equally worthy of our wonder and respect. Such an approach is analogous to the increasingly popular local food movement, whereby distant and exotic food is eschewed in favour of local production and processing. The word *locavore* literally means 'local eater.' Thus the term for a bioregional, or homeplace, tourist might be *locavist*, or 'local viewer.'

Bioregionalism is an old idea that has gained traction with the climate change crisis. Sometimes called 'living in place', bioregionalism implies an awareness of the ecology, economy and culture of the place where one lives (Berg and Dasmann 1977). It implies a commitment to making choices that enhance these places. It may mean buying food and other products produced close to home, as well as knowing local flora, fauna, land features, soil types, and weather patterns (Thayer 2003). Economically, it might mean banking with locally owned banks that invest in the community. Bioregional living could also entail seeking out entertainment that originates in your area and supporting local artists, musicians, theatre companies, and storytellers.

Locavism is simply bioregional tourism that takes place close to home. It is the act of shifting attention from distant, exotic places to our own backyards. It involves reducing our carbon footprint by choosing lower

energy, localized travel methods. It is favouring 'slow travel,' on the ground, over air travel.

Undeniably, there are amenity-rich regions and countries with pleasant climates where locavism may be more easily implemented. In areas with extreme climates and few amenities, the inability to make touristic escapes might be seen as an unacceptable hardship, just as local food movements require fertile land to flourish. It may be that paradigmatic changes will come last to these regions, brought on by catastrophic forces rather than choice. For regions where the shift to locavism is more readily achievable, making this change may reduce the impacts of these forces for the rest of the world.

Yet, even amenity poor areas might be re-imagined. Consider, for instance, the worn out old farm where Aldo Leopold dragged his family to spend their weekends and holidays. It is telling that they did not travel 'up north' to a lake cabin or 'out west' to national parks, as most well-heeled Midwestern American families did in those days. Rather, they found a place close to home, a place whose beauty was lost on everyone but them. They visited that place repeatedly and they invested in it. They formed powerful memories and attachments to that place, and in turn they restored its ecological function.

Like the Leopold family's Sand County farm, many local communities are not imbued with conventionally exciting destinations and experiences. A key element in the shift from tourism to locavism may lie in the realization that a simple connection to one's human and ecological community is equally valuable and rewarding as distant tourism experiences, without the carbon

impacts. The commonplace experiences available within a days walk, bike, or drive may ironically be more difficult to access because they do not fit our conventional destination images. Once experienced, however, these local places may become as rewarding as the stimulation of distant travel.

A key element in the transition to locavism will be media and communications that make local places feel 'exciting' and 'alive' for people. Parallels can again be found in the locavore movement, whereby a mass communication narrative connects people to place via local food and food systems. Similarly, locavist messaging would ignite interest and curiosity in local places and the desire to explore these places more deeply. Local school and university programming, community events, and local tourism operations can connect people to their bioregions via personal guides, online applications, or social media outlets. Younger people in particular may connect more readily with local places through the use of social media, public transport, and ubiquitous smart phone technologies.

In many ways, locavism is already occurring. Small and medium sized towns and cities are promoting local events to local residents. Local businesses also benefit from the added exposure as friendly local shopping destinations. Yeoman (2010) describes how in the current economic downturn, tourist identities have already become more oriented toward simplicity and thriftiness. The Transition Community movement illustrates how investment in local people and places may be a path to carbon reductions and building resilience in communities (Transition Network 2013). The tourism industry, in conjunction with chambers of commerce, could evolve in a similar fashion and put more creative effort into 'going local'.

As a model that decision-makers can use to construct effective, long-term priorities and policies, a locavist approach might include the following characteristics:

1. **Low Carbon:** Locavist development is, first and foremost, low-carbon tourism. It involves not only shifting toward low carbon modes of transport, but also reducing the need for travel by ensuring a range of quality local destinations. This mode and distance shift is critical if we are to achieve any true emission reductions (Lumsdon and Peeters 2009; Peeters 2007). Investment in local mass transit infrastructure would further reduce carbon emissions and increase amenity values close to home.
2. **Local Ecology, Economy, and Culture:** Locavist development is framed by the ecological potentials and limits of a region, and suited to the culture and values of the community. In turn, locavist destinations are designed to engage visitors through place-relevant and meaningful experiences that explore local nature, people, places, history, and/or culture.
3. **Local Food, Energy and Materials:** The success of the 'slow food' movement exemplifies this shift. A similar 'slow energy' and 'slow materials' approach is steadily emerging. One way to conceive of locavism is as 'slow tourism.'
4. **Human-scaled:** Locavism embraces human-powered travel combined with mass transit. In the transportation planning parlance, this is known as mode shift, or changing the relative reliance on one higher GHG-emitting form of travel for another, such as from commercial airline to train, or from single-occupant vehicles to public transit.

5. **Homegrown Solutions:** Finally, locavist development relies on locally developed solutions uniquely suited to bioregions and homeplaces, over national and state standards and codes.

At its core, the locavist approach rejects oil-based tourism models by focusing on keeping local residents, and their spending, within the region. Instead of spending precious marketing dollars on attracting residents from far away, the target market is people who live in or near, and are invested in, that bioregion. Aside from the carbon reduction benefits, locavists will theoretically have more disposable income to spend in their bioregions if they spent less to get there in the first place. As travel costs can significantly contribute to indebtedness, families can be better off by spending less for holidays and accruing the same benefits through locavism. These savings could accrue multiple personal benefits, including lower debt, time and energy to invest in the community, or the satisfaction derived from donating to reputable local and international aid or development organizations.

Tourism scholars and researchers would play a critical role in the realization of a localism (or locavism?) future for tourism. Towner (1995), for example, entreats tourism historians to explore broader tourist lifestyle and life cycle frameworks. Such frameworks could include the evolution of localized tourism systems and behaviours. Similar efforts could inform other socio-psychological, economic, and policy studies. In the same way that current research is assessing impacts of locavore diet shifts, tourism researchers might analyze the environmental performance of various locavist products and services (Tukker et al. 2011).

Marcel Proust once said, 'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.' This is a change in worldview for millions of people. With an open mind we can find wonder and adventure right out our front doors. It means resisting temptations to flee to faraway places and escape responsibilities close to home. This change will involve enormous challenges, but if tourism can stop being 'out there' and start being 'right here', then we will be one step closer to living rightly in the world.

End Notes:

1. A growing number of scientists now say we are living in a new geological epoch—the Anthropocene—where the influence of human behavior on the Earth's atmosphere is significant enough to change the Earth's life support system (Crutzen 2002). The term comes from the Greek words anthropo- meaning "human" and -cene meaning "period" or "era." The term was coined by ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer and popularized by the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen.
2. In climate science, radiative forcing is defined as the difference between radiant energy received by the earth and energy radiated back to space. Typically, radiative forcing is quantified at the tropopause in units of watts per square meter of earth's surface. A positive forcing (more incoming energy) warms the system, while negative forcing (more outgoing energy) cools it. Causes of radiative forcing include changes in insolation (incident solar radiation) and in concentrations of radiatively active gases and aerosols (IPCC 2001).

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