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## CHAPTER 11

### **The Meaning of the Manatee: An Examination of Community-Based Ecotourism Discourse and Practice in Gales Point, Belize**

*Jill M. Belsky*

The whole community ecotourism thing is very funny. It's as if Gales Point has become this make belief [make-believe] thing or image. But it's a shaky image, like a house of cards that if you blow will fall right over.

*Dolores Godfrey, former executive director, Belize Audubon Society*

Community-based conservation (CBC) in general, and ecotourism in particular, arose to correct human injustices and social impacts wrought by a prior model of protected area management that subordinated resident peoples' welfare and rights, and local economic development, to environmental preservation (West and Brechin 1991). Proponents of community-based ecotourism defend it as a locally beneficial way to use rural landscapes and cultures, especially relative to timber or mineral extraction, that contributes to both local economic development and the conservation of threatened habitats and species (Boo 1990; Whelan 1991; Lindberg and Hawkins 1993; Horwich et al. 1993; Western and Wright 1994).

However, despite good intentions and high hopes, community-based ecotourism is not necessarily benign, nor is it always benevolent. In the case of the Gales Point Manatee Community Conservation project in central Belize, community-based ecotourism is an invention of and intervention by conservationists and their allies in government ministries and nongovernmental agencies, and rural elites. Rather than resolving contradictions between environmental protection and use, community-based ecotourism has reinforced historic political struggles within the community and with imperial national and global forces, and it has intensified human injustice in the process. I offer the case of Gales Point as a cultural and political critique of community-based ecotourism, and as an example of the need for greater attention to political struggles and outcomes.

## POLICY AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The thin slip of a peninsula nestled between the Caribbean Sea and the Southern Lagoon situated in central Belize has been associated with the manatee<sup>1</sup> since the place was first settled and named (figures 11-1, 11-2). As people in the village tell it, Gales Point was named by a Belizean man, Mr. Gale, who took refuge there during a particularly nasty storm. While riding out the storm, he witnessed a large number of manatees swimming offshore, so he called the place Gales Point Manatee after himself and these large aquatic "sea cows." "We owe a lot to the manatee," explained an elderly Gales Point resident. "The manatee give us plenty to eat, and something to focus the mind on when we sit and think and look out at the lagoon." The greatest concentration of the endangered West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) in Central America exists in the Southern Lagoon surrounding Gales Point. They have become the focus of a major international conservation program. As a result, the importance of the manatee as a source of local sustenance—both material and cultural—has taken on new and often contradictory and contentious dimensions.

Ecotourism (otherwise described as responsible, alternative, caring and green tourism) has brought a new cachet to Belize, which was virtually unknown two decades ago as a British colonial backwater, and to the international traveler for whom the experience has become a key commodity and cultural good (Patulle 1996). Most of the literature on ecotourism in general and Belize in particular focuses on its value as an economic commodity and conservation approach, emphasizing the material constraints and contradictions yet to be worked out to implement it. Observers sug-



Figure 11-1 Belize



Figure 11-2 Manatee Special Development Area and Gales Point, Belize.

gest that local peoples and physical environments continue to bear the cost of ecotourism while benefits accrue to affluent national and foreign entrepreneurs (Boo 1990; Woods et al. 1992; Lindberg and Enriquez 1994; Place 1995). Yet for ecotourism to act as a catalyst for conservation and development, local communities must benefit from the influx of tourists and participate in nature-based tourism. This is necessary to correct past human injustices and social impacts associated with centralized models of protected area management and tourism, which paid little attention to resident peoples' welfare and rights, and local economic development (Wells and Brandon 1992; Wells 1994). Building on the community-based conservation movement,

it purports to privilege the concerns of rural communities, indigenous culture, and nature in the business of ecotourism (Western and Wright 1994).

However, it is unlikely that the rise of community-based ecotourism rectifies the injustices associated with "old tourism." First, there have been too few empirical case studies to judge whether the model provides the material benefits to local communities and environments that it claims to make.

Second, "new" ecotourism appears to continue—indeed accentuate—the subordination and dependency of Third World "peripheral" peoples and places, not only in a material political-economic sense but culturally as well (Munt and Higinio 1993; Patullo 1996). By this I mean the way local communities—and their cultural and physical environments—are socially constructed and offered up as international destinations and experiences for affluent tourists from "metropolitan" advanced capitalist economies. If we accept that it is primarily experiences and symbols, or cultural goods (Bourdieu 1984), that are being created and consumed, we need to ask whose visions construct these cultural goods for whose benefit, and at whose expense? Given this approach, a new window of cultural and political critique can be opened into how we conceive of and examine community-based ecotourism, and the justice or injustices that result from it.

There is much to suggest that "new tourism" (as ecotourism and community-based ecotourism themselves are constructed in Belize) represents a form of "new colonialism." As a new cultural form of commodity exchange, the Belize tourism industry (itself composed of many North American expatriates and "eco-lodge" owners) restructured itself to meet the desires of international tourists, who were once satisfied to flock to the beaches and coral-rimmed coasts but now want to venture inland for a nature- and culture-based experience. In response, the Belize tourist industry has demassified, repackaged, and relabeled its holiday product to cater to these presumed desires.<sup>2</sup>

There has been a market shift from the traditional mass packaged holidays, typically described as the "sun, sea, sand and sex." More flexibly packaged—individually oriented—tourisms are now of increasing significance, catering for a more "authentic" experience and characteristically environmentally and culturally sensitive.

Munt and Higinio (1993:61)

While ecotourism literature labels itself as supporting "sustainable development," "nature," and "culture," analysts rarely confront the ambiguous meanings of the words used to describe and market the experiences offered. Most critically, they do not explicitly recognize the political and economic ways in which words and images take on meanings (DuPuis and Vandergeest 1996). Their meanings are more than just points of view: they have consequences as people act on their understanding of key concepts such as "rural," "nature," and "wilderness," and orient them to meet their own self-interest.

Stories about nature, the human community and history . . . are crucial because they shape our ideas of what were, are, and should be human relationships with the natural world. Moreover, when stories about nature and the human community are linked to power and funding, they have important ethical, political and legal consequences.

*Zerner (1994a:69)*

With regard to community-based ecotourism, it is helpful to consider how others have analyzed the words often used to describe and promote these projects. A separation—of rural from urban, managed from wild, and human activity from natural processes—remains the basis for most development projects and suggests an important direction of inquiry for critically examining community-based ecotourism. "Biodiversity" (habitat, flora, fauna, ecological process, and genetic resources) is split from the sphere of human practices and becomes the privileged subject matter, while human groups and their rights are devalued or peripheralized (Zerner 1996). The construction of boundaries between these categories creates contradictions with the daily activities of rural people whose everyday lives do not adhere to these separations or whose understanding of these categories may differ from that of the people with power. When land use and resource managers conceptualize and plan biodiversity conservation programs on the bases of their abstract categories and imaginings, they often need to resort to coercion or violence to implement regulations based on these views (Peluso 1992a; DuPuis and Vandergeest 1996). These have entailed attempts to change dietary habits, restrict resource use to designated "zones," or prohibit people from using their lands, forests, and reefs completely (Zerner 1996).

Given that a "wilderness" experience has become a big seller in community-based ecotourism, *how is it conceived? Many have written that the tendency is to approach the "wilderness experience" as pitting the human against the nonhuman, and to assume an almost religious meaning and conviction that can justify harsh consequences for local peoples.*

However much one may be attracted to such a vision, it entails problematic consequences. For one, it makes wilderness the locus for an epic struggle between malign civilization and benign nature, compared with which all other social, political, and moral concerns are trivial. . . . If we set too high a stock on wilderness, too many other corners of the earth become less than natural and too many other people become less than human, thereby giving us permission not to care much about their suffering or their fate.

*Cronon (1995:84)*

A tendency to idealize wilderness and its inhabitants (when their physical existence is acknowledged) and to care little about social and political impacts is particularly germane to outsiders' views of tropical and neotropical rainforests—the modern-day Gardens of Eden. Yet these are also the places where ecotourism discourse claims to be appropriate and effective.

This brief look at policy and theory raises many questions. Does ecotourism, and community-based ecotourism more specifically, move beyond simple dualisms and conceptions of nature as sacred, timeless, and located in the past and the tropical periphery? Are affluent urban recreationists (including biodiversity planners) pitted against or working with rural people who actually earn their living from the natural resources? How does each group view nature, ecotourism, and themselves and one another? How is "traditional" Creole culture constructed, valued, and offered as an international cultural experience? These questions are highly relevant if we consider that "primitive" peoples in tropical areas are often idealized, even sentimentalized, until the moment they do something unprimitive, modern, and unnatural, thereby falling from environmental grace (Cronon 1995). What do analyses of concrete efforts tell us about the cultural frameworks utilized by planners, and the congruity between them, their activities, and the histories and lives of people in particular rural areas?

The case study that follows, although not explicitly about laws and rights, is nonetheless a story about justice. The justice question here revolves around the politics and power of controlling images and cultural meanings in the production of community ecotourism, and the profound impacts, however unexpected or unintended, they have had on the lives of people, especially those with little power. It is also about new possibilities for struggle and resistance to these controlling images (Escobar 1995).

### GALES POINT HISTORICALLY

The village of Gales Point is a four-hour boat ride from the nation's capital. Like the rest of the country, the area has been largely undeveloped, and exploited mostly for its natural resources—by Spanish, British, and, more recently, American interests<sup>3</sup>. In the early part of the century, few people lived on the peninsula. There was no road, only the river for passage, and that was not navigable during the dry season. The peninsula remained a nameless settlement for shipwrecked and escaped slaves who were able to remain hidden because of its remoteness, at least until Mr. Gale arrived.

After the world depression in the 1930s, Creoles (the descendants of European colonists and African slaves) came from Belize City to settle in Gales Point. A major draw was the availability of work created by foreigner Paul Merritt, who owned and operated a lumber mill near Soldier Creek beginning in the early 1940s. In the 1950s, Gales Point was an economically active village with income derived from logging, bush farming, hunting, fishing, and revenue from middle to upper class Belize City residents who built vacation bungalows along the shorelines.

Lumber operations closed after hurricane Hattie destroyed most of the structures in 1961. After that time, residents faced severe economic hardships. Social programs financed by the government focused on the concept of basic needs: in Gales Point they worked to promote home gardens, hygiene, and cottage industry (e.g., fruit production and preservation). However, in the 1970s, government monies for social

welfare programs dried up as the country followed structural adjustment mandates set forth by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the absence of economic alternatives, residents of Gales Point depended largely on forests and sea resources for their subsistence. Residents (including the settlement of Soldier Creek, which relocated to Gales Point after the lumber mill closed) took advantage of the lagoon and creeks to fish, and to reach the bush and savannahs for farming root crops and hunting [especially for small rodents known as gibnut (*Agouti paca*), deer (brocket deer), tapir (white-lipped peccary), armadillo, turtle (green and hicatee), and the large manatee]. Villagers also extracted and sold chicle for the manufacturing of chewing gum, and other forest products such as "tie-tie" vines (*Desmoncus schippii*), which they wove into baskets for home use, in addition to a range of other plants collected as medicinals.

These activities then and now are carried out by a population characterized as "a skewed mix of children and their grandparents" (Manatee Advisory Committee 1992:1). Most of the Gales Point working-age population lives in Belize City or the United States, where they can find employment. In 1994, the population of Gales Point was approximately 400, composed of seventy-seven full-time households and sixteen seasonal ones. These statistics conceal the fact that there is much population movement in and out of Gales Point. Many young men leave the village each year for a few months to earn income in Belize City and the United States. They and others return to Gales Point for months at a time, or at least for holidays.

This brief history of Gales Point suggests the centrality of natural resources in the village economy, seasonal migrations to and from the village, and the long-term presence of foreign interests. Gales Point has not developed a diversified economy, in large part because of foreign domination, geographic remoteness, and vulnerability to extreme weather. By the late 1980s, the ability of natural resources to provide sustenance to Gales Point residents declined precipitously. This has been the result, not of population increase (given the high incidence of out-migration), but of competition with foreigners for land and marine resources. While many residents continue to cultivate small milpa farms near Soldier Creek some seven miles from the village, many more used to cultivate the fertile land just south of the village. During the 1970s, these lands were sold by the Belizean government to an American couple who developed a large citrus plantation known as White Ridge Farm. High debt and IMF-imposed structural adjustment policies in the 1970s had turned the Belizean economy further toward foreign trade and ownership, increasingly with the United States rather than with the ex-British colonists (Moberg 1992; Shoman 1994). The Belizean government asserted its ownership over the property to which villagers lacked legal title, claiming that it inherited the land as "eminent domain" from the British colonial regime. The Belize government offered residents other land to farm, but these lands were infertile and located far from Gales Point village. Additionally, while the plantation provides some local employment, agrochemicals also run off from agricultural fields to the stream that provides Gales Point's drinking water (Greenlee, personal correspondence, April 1996).

During the 1970s, another foreigner secured title to the tip of the peninsula, and

the Manatee Fishing Lodge was created. The advent of commercial fishing in the lagoons created severe competition with local fishermen. Whereas local fishermen in the past fished with rods from small nonmotorized dories, and largely for home consumption, both commercial and local fishermen periodically used large, finely meshed "gill nets" and fiberglass motorized boats, which greatly expanded their catch and range (eight villagers owned gill nets in the village in 1994).<sup>4</sup> Local fishermen said they now fish for as much as they can catch to sell in the local and Belize City markets. By 1994, the Manatee Fishing Lodge had changed owners and officially dropped *fishing* from its name. The name change symbolizes the demise of world-class sport fishing in the area, which the lodge had created just a decade earlier. The lodge now markets its main attractions as sport fishing and diving off of the cays (islands), the scenic seaside views of Gales Point, and Mayan archaeological ruins.

As a result of increasing foreign investment, Gales Point villagers turned to the sea and bush for their livelihood. Unlike in indigenous Mayan villages located elsewhere in Belize, there were no common-management properties, customs, or ethics regarding resource access, allocation, control, or use in Gales Point. Natural resources were de facto open access; that is, people could extract or use nondeveloped bush and marine environments as they pleased, which they did. A 1994 random household survey that my students and I conducted in Gales Point found that 89 percent of Gales Point residents obtained their primary food through purchase (consisting of rice, red beans, and flour to make biscuits known as *Johnny Cakes*), rather than from home production. They purchased this food from one small store in the village, or in Belize City. Approximately a third of the residents earn income to purchase commodities through wage-work (such as working at the White Ridge citrus plantation or the Manatee Lodge, teaching, postal work, or doing boat repairs/carpentry). Another third of the households earn income from selling bush meat, especially gibbon.<sup>5</sup> The remaining households obtain income from relatives abroad who send remittances and, since 1992, from providing ecotourist services. A very small minority earned their income primarily from selling fish or farm crops (root-crops, bananas, vegetables, cashew, and coconuts).

Wildlife to most Gales Point residents has historically been valued as an important source of food and income, as have the sea and the lagoons; some are also dangerous predators or annoying pests. Wild peccary are killed for meat but also when they root and consume foods cultivated on small farms. Morelet crocodiles are killed by residents as they float into the lagoon during the rainy season, threatening small dogs and children. Villagers also hunt gibbon with no restraint, since they view these large rodents as aggressive and capable of rapid reproduction. Freshwater and sea turtle (hicatee, green, hawksbill) are also easily hunted and the meat highly favored in Creole cuisine; the hawksbill shell is also used to make jewelry and other ornaments.

Gales Point residents' utilitarian approach to nature, however, does not preclude their appreciation or value for nature as noncommodity. The lagoon and sea are appreciated for their view, as a place for rest and relaxation, and as a source of con-



temptation while watching the gentle manatees. One older resident spoke regretfully of cutting back bush and the resultant loss of bird species as the village is extended so that the wealthy from Belize City can purchase and construct vacation homes on prime beach-front lots:

I am sad that my grandchildren will not see the scarlet macaw and curaso that I watched every day as a young child. The big birds have all been killed or disappeared with the clearing of the bush to make houses.

In the context of limited economic opportunity and mounting resource scarcity brought on by the encroachment of wealthy nonlocal vacationers and profiteers, Gales Point residents have survived by cutting the bush; killing, consuming, and selling wild game; fishing; and, to a lesser extent, farming. Nature in this rural Creole community is dynamic, resilient, and inclusive of human activity. Even in the absence of local resource management customs (offset by high rates of out-migration), nature has, until recently, provided. Environmental degradation and scarcity intensified with foreign commercial enterprises that significantly raised the scale of extraction and limited the access of local villagers to fertile land and remaining fish. In the 1990s, competition with foreign interests have further intensified, this time over the meaning and control of wildlife.

## **CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE GALES POINT MANATEE CONSERVATION PROJECT**

Many articles have been published on the origin, intention, and operation of the Gales Point Manatee Community Conservation project, most authored by project founder Robert Horwich and his associates (e.g., Horwich 1995; Horwich and Lyon 1995; Horwich et al. 1993). A close examination of project proposals, plans, and brochures will be provided, with special attention to the planners' conception of the nature, culture, and community to be conserved, organized, and marketed for ecotourism, as well as the factors they claim make the project a community-based effort.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1968, the area surrounding Gales Point has been proposed as a protected area (Zisman 1989), and various visitors have initiated efforts to protect turtles and other wildlife. However, the current effort was begun with a proposal to the government of Belize in February 1991, drafted by wildlife biologist Robert Horwich and Jon Lyon. They proposed that the area, including the village of Gales Point, be designated a biosphere reserve. The proposed reserve encompassed approximately 170,000 acres of a variety of habitats, endangered and threatened species, and property rights (Horwich 1995). Horwich and Lyon had begun community conservation in Belize with the Community Baboon Sanctuary, a project involving 100 or more private landowners (Horwich 1990; Horwich and Lyon 1990), and they were eager to build on what they had learned (Horwich and Lyon 1998). The proposed Gales

Point project provided an opportunity to pursue community-based conservation across a mosaic of habitats and property rights regimes, together with government and private actors, and to give more attention to constructing village support and community-based management structures. According to Horwich (1995:8), the proposal evolved in the following way:

During a trip to the area by Horwich and Chris Augusta, a long-term part-time resident of the area, a plan was proposed to the village in which villagers signed a supporting document. An initial proposal for a biosphere reserve for the area was written and submitted to the village council of Gales Point and the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment. . . . Further discussions with government staff led to the government organizing a meeting at Gales Point which included politicians and staff of the Departments of Forestry and Archeology as well as members of the tourism community and villagers. A follow-up proposal was written for a multiple land use protected area to incorporate the additional ideas from the various government meetings.

Close attention was given by project planners and government agencies to mapping, zoning, and regulating human activity across the Manatee Special Development Area (SDA). Using the biosphere philosophy, the plan provides for core areas where human disturbance will be minimal, buffer zones where specific human uses are designated, and transition zones where human activities will be restricted. Human use will be limited to low-impact ecotourism in core areas, which were selected for specific endangered species, specific ecosystems, and watershed protection (Horwich and Lyon 1998). "Proper" land use was determined through the lens of biosphere philosophy and scientific wildlife management.

The Belizean government responded by designating the Manatee Special Development Area in November 1991, and the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment headed by Minister Glen Godfrey committed funds to begin the project and to construct a hotel that was to be turned over to a village cooperative once it was formed. The Belize Audubon Society directed by Dolores Godfrey lent its support, as did the U.S. Peace Corps, which assigned two volunteers to the project. Later on, the project received grants from the United States Aid for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Global Environmental Fund for biodiversity assessments and village improvement, such as loans to improve homes and build septic systems, administered through the Belizean non-governmental organization (NGO) known as BEST (Belize Enterprises for Sustainable Technology).

Horwich et al. (1993) put forth three main objectives of the Manatee Community Reserve (also at times referred to as the sanctuary). These are (1) to develop a locally supported reserve that integrates multi-land use for private and government-owned lands and ensures sustainable use of resources; (2) to maintain and strengthen the local rural culture (based on farming, fishing, and hunting); and (3) to give the village a supplementary source of income through tourism, resulting in economic self-sufficiency and less pressure on natural resources.

The sanctuary will concentrate on developing tourism around the community lifestyle, giving tourists an authentic experience of village life, something like the exposure to Creole culture at the Community Baboon Sanctuary. Allowing tourists to enjoy an "intercultural experience" should also relieve villagers of pressure to invent a sense of opulence for tourists.

Horwich et al. (1993:162)

The planners insist that conservation in the area will encompass preservation of the rural lifestyle, and change will occur in accordance with community wishes and under community control. The project will "keep the cultural unity and integrity of the village intact" while providing opportunities for pleasing tourists.

At Gales Point, certain areas where manatees and American crocodiles reside would please naturalists. Setting up permanent viewing sites such as an anchored raft or a viewing tower in these situations would further enhance the possibility of viewing wildlife. Often things that villagers and local guides take for granted will thrill foreign visitors.

Finally, with an eye to pleasing tourists, Gales Point villagers should appraise their village. With village consensus, improvements might include alternative toilets to accommodate both village and tourist wastes. . . . Planning and constructing boat moorings and piers should be under strict local control.

Horwich et al. (1993:163)

Horwich writes that it was the villagers of Gales Point who formed a cooperative to manage ecotourism activities, including community associations focused on delivering the various ecotourism services.

In January, 1992, villagers of Gales Point formed the Gales Point Progressive Cooperative (GPPC) to promote sustainable economic development and to conserve the natural environment of the region—. . . A number of associations were created under the Gales Point Progressive Cooperative which included a bed-and-breakfast association, a tour operators association, a farmers association, and a local products association. Since the community requested help, the Manatee Advisory Team (MAT) . . . was created in mid-July, 1992.

Despite the lead role he and other foreigners played in instigating and implementing the project, Horwich represents the project efforts as home-grown, claiming that the project has had strong village support, "with over 50 percent of the adult community getting involved in at least one of the cooperative's programs" (Horwich 1995:9).

Elsewhere, he and coauthor Lyon write that a primary emphasis in their programs was the empowerment of local people. They claim to have advanced this goal in Gales Point through the operation of community-based programs that involve local people not only in managing ecotourism-income generation, but in research and conservation activities that promote local conservation awareness. Furthermore,

they write that local empowerment was also enhanced and strengthened through encouraging participants of different community associations in Gales Point to interact among themselves, as well as with similar communities, for information sharing and morale boosting (Horwich and Lyon 1998).

### **IN ANOTHER VOICE: THE CONTRADICTIONS AND IRONIES OF COMMUNITY ECOTOURISM**

The preceding narratives suggest the large role played by American wildlife biologists in conceptualizing, organizing, funding, and implementing activities in Gales Point around the foreign concept of community ecotourism. That the project was not initiated from within the Gales Point community, nor built upon historic community-based resource management traditions, contests its representation as "community-based conservation"—at least by some definitions (e.g., Western and Wright 1994). How do planners' views of the community, nature, and ecotourism activities mesh with the cultural frameworks and daily lives of Gales Point residents generally, and by class and gender more specifically? If there are costs, what are they and how are they differentially borne across the physical and social landscapes?

#### ***What Community? Whose "Community Lifestyle?"***

Project proposals, plans, and brochures speak about "a" Gales Point "community" and "community lifestyle," which are mobilized into "community associations," and generate widespread "grassroots" support for ecotourism and conservation activities. Who is this assumed community? And whose lifestyle is the project conserving, and for whose benefit and at what cost?

The image of Gales Point community that is pictured and marketed to international and wealthy Belizean ecotourists, and which, I argue, is an invention of and intervention by project planners, is presented in a video on community conservation produced by the Belize Ministry of Tourism and Environment. The text also suggests that Belizeans themselves are implicated in this project, and in ways that reflect their own varying identities and positions. A Belizean narrator introduces Gales Point to the audience with the following words: "We drive into Gales Point village on the only street in this sleepy easy-going village." She boasts of the attraction of Gales Point to tourists viewing "natural sights," and residents "valuing the pristine state of their facility, especially the lagoon where the manatee live." Aboard a motorboat to view the manatee, she says, "Now we are going there to see if Kevin will call out any of his pets." She later concludes "that everyone feels encouraged to continue developing Gales Point. . . . Conservation of the resources which makes Gales Point and its surrounding area unique is vital to the village's very existence."

The segment on Gales Point concludes with village councilman and cooperative president Walter Goff celebrating the project and the income it generates. Chair

of the tour guide association, Kevin Andrewin, concurs: "I live better. I love when people come and I take them out and around."

The words and pictures that accompany the narrative paint a picture of a quaint, clean, seaside rural village welcoming visitors to come and enjoy first-hand their natural and cultural amenities. The economy is presented as dependent on local natural resources provided from a still "pristine" physical environment, a Creole culture intact and traditional, and a community devoid of complexity, activity, conflict, and diversity (symbolized by the single dirt path). The Gales Point in this gaze is not tinged by internal conflict, poverty, violence, environmental change—let alone degradation—nor even human history.

Alternate images and a historical perspective challenge and dismantle this fiction. As noted previously, the landscape evolved from the hand of human activity: logging, farming, hunting, and fishing, as well as an unsentimental approach to animals. Wild animals have been hunted as game or eradicated as pests, not revered as symbols of wilderness or "endangered species." That the video's narrator, most likely an urban, upper-class Belizean, refers to the manatee as "pets" provides a third meaning of the manatee most familiar to Belizean city dwellers—neither as untamed wildlife nor endangered species, but as domesticated pet.

A differently framed picture of Gales Point reveals "quaint" houses as rundown and broken, beaches as garbage littered and dotted with lagoon outhouses, and an "easy-going" population preoccupied with survival and uneasy relations with each other. The feelings produced from this alternate angle are decidedly less tidy and comforting than those prompted by the promotional video.

A jolting image is the abandoned car parked a few houses down from Miss Samuel's dry goods store. The insignia and name "Bloods" scribbled across this car in bright red paint signals that drugs and an international drug culture and economy are very present in remote Gales Point, even subsidizing some of the most important elements in community ecotourism.

While men in the village talk about construction as the work they do when they seasonally migrate to the United States, a few share the truth that these trips bring considerable and fast income from marketing illegal drugs (mostly cocaine and marijuana), which they secure through growers in western Belize or by transshipment from South America.<sup>7</sup> Drugs enter the village through other venues as well. A few years back, a group of young Gales Point youths found a bag of cocaine that had washed up on a nearby cay. They divided the booty among themselves. Some of the youths immediately consumed the drugs, while others sold them in Belize City and were arrested. Still others arranged the marketing with greater caution. One youth carefully sold his portion of the drugs, saving the income and eventually purchasing a speedboat, which he uses today to guide ecotourists for day trips to the Manatee watch, the Caribbean seashore, or ancient Mayan caves.

The seasonal migrations of urban Belize City residents and those from the United States to Gales Point also carry with them worldly connections, material possessions, and notions that challenge the limited albeit opportunistic view of the village as

traditional, rural, self-contained, and remote—the perfect place for a “getaway” and “natural” vacation.<sup>8</sup> Deeply involved in circuits of migration, people from Gales Point challenge the ease and simplicity of a spatially and culturally stable Gales Point community. Foreign remittances provide much needed income in Gales Point and Belize more widely. But their checks, urbanized dress, occupations, and “modern” education and ways are not incorporated into the image sold to ecotourists. Nonetheless, despite living most of their lives in Chicago, Brooklyn, or Texas, many seasonal returnees maintain a strong attachment to Gales Point, one that also buys into memories and desires for a simple, quaint home village. I had a few conversations with visitors one Easter morning, which spoke to their attachment, as well as their resentment of tourists and planners intruding with their own projections and plans for Gales Point. No doubt, crowded beaches, car-strewn streets, and lounging well-dressed urbanites—typical scenes during major holidays—are not the views highlighted and reproduced in promotional brochures.

### UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES AND IRONIES

While promoting cultural events to attract tourists to Gales Point and provide opportunities for tourist income to replace “unsustainable” livelihood practices, some unintended and environmentally dubious outcomes have developed. These suggest not only the comedy implicit in community ecotourism, but the ironies produced by it as well.

In line with delivering an “authentic Creole” experience, residents are resurrecting an old tradition of evening “drumming.” For a cost of around US\$45, young men in traditional dress drum while villagers and guests dance around a blazing bonfire. Many neighborhood families come out to watch and dance, and sing songs in Creole which suggest African rhythms and antislavery lyrics (such as lampooning white masters). Whether or not the performances are authentic or a spectacle put on for tourists, they have generated renewed interest in drummings and a demand for drums made by local residents. Drums are made from various woods, with different animal skins pulled across the top, which produce different sounds. The best ones are made from wildcat skins, especially ocelot—a species on every conservationist’s protection list. A long-term wildlife biology consultant has suggested that they shift to goat skins.

As the planners encourage men and women in the village to offer tourists an “authentic” experience of Creole culture, for bed-and-breakfast (B&B) operators this translates into the food they serve their guests. However, many providers are confused about what to serve, as well as about the government’s intentions regarding endangered wildlife. Many of the most traditional or “authentic” Creole dishes involve bushmeat, which is no longer legally hunted in the Manatee SDA [i.e., turtle, armadillo, and iguana (known locally as bamboo chicken)]. A B&B provider I stayed with complains, “I want [to] prepare for you real Creole food. But the gov-

ernment [doesn't] want us [to] collect turtle eggs or kill turtles. How [are] we supposed to provide Creole culture when we can't serve hicauee and white rice. It's ridiculous."

Another resident adds, "The government [is] always pushing advertisements on TV and radio about traditional Creole dinner, telling tourists to come eat hicauee and white rice. What is the government trying to push? Is it telling people to kill turtle or not?"

Instead, tourists are routinely served the same main meal: a stew of beans, rice, and chicken. Guests frequently receive unneaded spaghetti, sardines, or a sandwich for lunch<sup>9</sup>, and, although desired by tourists, few vegetables, and fresh fruit only when seasonally available. Although gibbon is traditional food in Gales Point, "we know foreigners don't like to eat rat so we don't serve it to them though this is too bad, because gibbon is good meat, and we can hunt it or buy it in the village when we need it."

Project planners have also encouraged the production of native crafts for sale to tourists, although few "natives" still retain knowledge about plaiting baskets. Building on successes in other villages with selling baskets as "jungle products," an elderly woman named Miss Iris, who spends half of each year in Los Angeles and is interested in renewing pride in Creole culture, has been teaching a small group of interested women and men to weave baskets. Miss Iris explains:

So few people here know how to plait baskets anymore. Back then we all knew how to do it because there wasn't any plastic. But plastic is now cheap, widely available and doesn't leak, so most people do not want to spend the time or money buying the vines and weaving baskets. Many too do not want to invest the time to make baskets until they are ensured of a market. We do have a problem with marketing.

Baskets are woven exclusively for tourists, and there have been significant problems with poor quality, high pricing, and limited markets. Additionally, whether the extraction of "tie-tie" vines for baskets and other handicrafts disrupts local flora and fauna, and whether they can be sustainably harvested under higher collection pressures are questions that need to be answered before assuming the enterprise is ecologically sustainable (Belsky and Siebert 1997). Similarly, promotion of local crafts has led to villagers buying black coral and constructing jewelry and other handicrafts to sell to tourists. Although illegal, harvesting of coral persists in Belize, with negative repercussions for reef ecology and efforts to protect coastal environments.

Another unintended consequence of rural ecotourism is that capital accumulation from operating B&Bs and tour boats is being used to develop a new, locally initiated brand of ecotourism. In 1996, residents shared with us their dreams to construct a cabana or two in their yard, and even possibly a small restaurant. Some have already begun to live this dream. A lesson learned from hosting B&Bs is that both residents and foreign guests prefer a little privacy and social distance. But unlike the community-based rural ecotourism project, which has tried to facilitate tourist development within a broader context of land-use planning and community participation (including a concern for equity), the private-cabana approach will be available to

only those who can afford it and will not be coordinated for any equitable distribution of resources, benefits, or service delivery—and certainly not for environmental conservation or cultural preservation. In the current political economic climate of privatization and export production, it is likely that this trend will garner both national and international support.

Indeed, community-based ecotourism (and community-based conservation more generally) suggests an approach at odds with countervailing globalization forces and ideology. Globalization supports an urban-biased, export-led model of development that privileges markets and privatization over nonmarket, socialized, or common-managed approaches to development, and that entails significant environmental degradation (McMichael 1996).

### UNEVEN PARTICIPATION AND NEW VULNERABILITIES

Contrary to claims put forth in the promotional video and publications, widespread and grassroots participation in community ecotourism activities has not developed, nor has anything close to “empowerment” been achieved in Gales Point. Indeed, participation and benefits have been uneven, and new vulnerabilities associated with community ecotourism have arisen, especially for village women.

In 1994, two years after the project was up and running, ten women operated B&Bs and were members of the B&B association; seven women joined the craft association; eight men provided services with the boat operator association, and fourteen men were members of the farmers’ association. Importantly, most of the men and women participating in these enterprises belonged to the same five or so households. The manager of the B&B association, Hortense Welch, is the mother of the chairman of the tour guiding association (Kevin), and wife of the most popular bush guide (Moses Andrewin). She is also a long-term member of the village council headed by Waller Goff, also president of the umbrella-management organization, the Gales Point Progressive Cooperative. That a few so-called progressive households and individuals dominate village political and economic affairs is not uncommon in rural development, but its reality shatters the fragile illusion of community-wide participation.

Additionally, in 1996 we found that two-thirds of the women operating B&Bs were employed either by the Manatee Lodge, the White Ridge citrus plantation, or the Belizean government. This pattern is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that a small oligarchy of community residents and households usually seizes the opportunity to access new resources. Second, it reveals that the individuals and households that do participate and receive material benefits from ecotourism are not those most dependent on the “subsidy from nature”—those who should benefit and who in turn will promote conservation, according to ecotourism discourse (Hecht et al. 1988:25). Logically, it is the better-off households who can meet the standards for offering B&B services, including bedrooms with specified furniture, and cooking and bathroom facilities with basic sanitation. And third, it suggests



added burdens on female B&B operators striving to combine historic domestic responsibilities with new paid-labor and ecotourist-related services.<sup>16</sup>

In the first two years after tourism activities began, substantial tourism money was earned for those providing B&B and tour guiding services, especially because of the annual visits of student groups such as our own. However, income from B&B activities declined from 1994 to 1996 as a result of reductions in the number of tourists, a rise in food prices, and the establishment of new B&Bs in the village. In 1996, the price for one night of lodging and three meals increased from US\$15 per person to \$20 to cover added costs (including a value-added tax of 15 percent instituted in 1996), but still women complained. "Even with the raise it don't bring much profit to providing cooked meals." B&B operators also lament that nonassociation members are opening B&Bs, providing significant competition, and undercutting their prices. The nonassociation members claim that they can provide quality services without the assistance (and the obligations) of the B&B association. With regard to B&B management, women raised concerns that the B&B association manager assigned guests on the basis of favoritism rather than following a rotation schedule.

These complaints were exacerbated by new debt. In 1994, loans from the Belizean organization BEST were made available to improve B&B accommodation. In 1996, B&B members were encouraged to take loans to construct indoor plumbing and septic tanks at an interest rate of approximately 10 percent monthly. Residents not affiliated with the project expressed great resentment that they did not receive assistance for building toilets. Ironically, however, because of design choices and water shortages in the village, many of the new toilets do not function and cannot be used. The reduction in tourists combined with repayment obligations leave many B&B operators worried that they will not be able to repay loans.

Some B&B operators are concerned that they cannot combine historic domestic responsibilities with providing ecotourist services and new employment, and these worries are leading to new conflicts at home. With employment opportunities (and increased debt), B&B operators are faced with choices such as whether to transfer B&B hosting duties to other family members (e.g., keeping young girls home from school); offering lesser-quality service (e.g., serving bagged lunches), or not accepting guests entirely (and forgoing needed income). The costs of these choices are borne differently across households, and by male and female family members of different ages within these households.

## REINFORCING COMMUNITY RIVALRIES

That the project has wrought resentment between households, between local residents and project planners, and between ecotourists and the state was strongly communicated to us during our last two visits to Gales Point. In 1994, a small amount of project funds was allocated to build a community craft center in Gales Point to facilitate marketing of locally produced handicrafts. However, labor had to be hired

to build the center since residents were not willing to assist in its construction. In 1995, when the building was half constructed, it was destroyed by arson by members within the community as a result of disputes over the land upon which it was built, the construction methods utilized, and the perception that the same few families were receiving the majority of employment opportunities from the project.<sup>11</sup>

Another example involves utilities. Government officials connected to the project were instrumental in bringing diesel-generated electricity and pumped water (from a nearby river) to the village, and in facilitating collection and payment of fees, which has become contentious and even violent. Households are charged a flat fee of US\$10 per month for water and electricity, rather than an amount based on individual household usage. In addition to lacking an incentive to conserve fuel and water, some households refuse to pay their bill because they are unwilling to subsidize the B&Bs, which consume more water and energy in the form of refrigerators, lights, fans, and other appliances used by or for overnight tourists. During our stay in 1993, there were neither lights nor water available because a majority of villagers declined to pay the bill.

In addition to not wishing to subsidize B&B services, nonparticipating community members lament the rise of stratification in the village, or what they express as "not coming up together." One woman protested that a rival had commissioned the feared obea man (a specialist in black magic) to place a spell on her and her household because they generated more income from ecotourism activities and from paid employment. One resident I knew well told me, "I [am] going to let the garbage pile up on the beach. This is what we do with garbage in Gales Point. Maybe if the tourists don't like it, they won't come. And they will leave Gales Point to us."

Refusing to pick up his garbage is this man's way of resisting and speaking back to foreign-led ecotourism and conservation, the greater capital accumulation of his neighbors, a loss of personal control, and an affront to his ethics and aesthetics associated with all of these. His critique is lost on project planners, who call for more training in "hospitality" and providing international standards of tourism "service." They miss the point or choose to ignore that the failure to pick up garbage, or "impoliteness," is not just the result of different approaches to service but is related to the unequal and racist historical relationship between blacks and whites, masters and slaves, and colonizers and the colonized.

Predictably, members of households receiving income from ecotourism are more sympathetic to the project and its environmental conservation principles and strategies. "I hunt less because of tourism," acknowledged a tour guide whose wife operates a B&B. "I used to hunt more but now I don't fool with it as much because staying out at night makes me too tired to guide tourists during the day." He finds nature guiding more lucrative and less arduous than hunting for gibbon.

However, households that depend on hunting for their primary income and who do not receive income from ecotourism resent attempts to impose limitations on their hunting activities. They criticize government officials and foreign consultants who advocate new conservation regulations that require the purchase of hunting permits, that restrict hunting of particular species to particular seasons and uses, and that pro-

hibit hunting of certain species altogether. Many protest what they perceive to be an insensitivity to their limited material resources. "We don't hunt, we don't eat," one woman reminds a student. "We [do] not get back for our loss," complained an older bush hunter who does not receive any money from ecotourism. "Maybe others do, but not us." Another man complained that government officials do not enforce the laws anyway, and after instructing you not to hunt, they will buy or confiscate precious turtles from you for their meat and shells.

The project has also exacerbated historic political rivalries. It is no secret that then-minister of tourism and environment Glen Godfrey financially and logistically supported the Gales Point community ecotourism project (and the village council through which it worked) to award and promote patronage for his political party, the Peoples United Party (PUP), which was in power from 1989 to 1993. Although not all community members in Gales Point are aligned with the PUP, most are. Those who favor the opposing party complain that they are not able to join community ecotourism associations even if they desire to do so. Since the country's other major political party, the United Democratic Party (UDP), regained power in 1993, financial support for most project activities has ceased. No funds have been forthcoming to complete the Manatee Cooperative Hotel.<sup>12</sup> In 1996, there was a visible void with regard to management of ecotourist activities and governance of the village as a whole. Some residents, such as Horense Welch, have responded by realigning themselves with the other party, the UDP; others have retreated from community activities entirely.

When the new Manatee Road was constructed in 1992 linking Gales Point village to the country's two major highways, political patronage was offered to Gales Point residents to support community conservation and ecotourism with the promise of land titles to adjoining parcels. Offers to provide some forty acres to Gales Point were made by both PUP and UDP politicians. However, in neither case did residents actually receive land titles, and in one instance a Gales Point resident with established perennial crops on his farm was informed that the property had been sold to a Jamaican. Nonetheless, villagers continue to clear bush for farms. This includes clearing fertile parcels adjoining rivers and streams, despite the riparian conservation regulations of planners forbidding clearing land unless it is at least sixty-six feet away from rivers. A resident summed up the sentiment of many villagers:

We [are] all vying to be close to the government. But it [doesn't] matter PUP or UDP. Either one [is] going to sell that land to make big money. But without land to farm we in Gales Point [will] never be able to get ahead. Food is so expensive and now the government [doesn't] want us to hunt anymore. What are our kids going to eat?

## STATE ACTIONS AND GLOBAL POLICIES

It is unlikely that ecotourism can or should be more than a supplemental source of income, and planners agree. Livelihood security is more likely the result of a diversified economy that modifies rather than replaces traditional food- and income-generating

activities, and that is directed toward local rather than foreign markets. However, the *political economy of development in Belize*, spurred by debt and structural adjustment mandates, continues to adhere to an export-led, productivist model of development with little or no regard for environmental costs (Deere et al. 1990; Shoman 1994), and unequal concentrations of land ownership (King et al. 1993). These trends suggest further contradictions between community-based ecotourism discourse and practice, namely, that focusing attention solely on the community ignores social and environmental impacts of state actions and global policies.

Despite the designation of Gales Point and its surroundings as a Special Development Area, the Belizean state is intensifying production of commercial exports in the SDA that are environmentally suspicious, and Gales Point residents themselves observe this and question it. In 1994, the government permitted gravel and dredging operations in a major tributary to the Manatee River (Soldier Creek) with no regard for environmental impacts or damage to a farm cultivated by a local Gales Point resident. The state has also failed to respond to concerns regarding petrochemical contamination of Gales Point's drinking water (Greenlee, personal correspondence, April 1996). And in 1996, our group observed logging trucks emerging from the forested headwaters of the Sibun, which drains into the lagoon complex comprising the Manatee SDA. Mennonites were hired to cut timber in the Sibun drainage with permits from the Belizean government to clearcut parcels for a flat fee of BZ\$30,000—without any prior inventory or environmental impact assessment as required by law. Cleared land (readied for conversion to citrus) fetches the government a higher price than forested land. In addition to potential negative environmental impacts, logging reduces access to forest and bush resources utilized by Gales Point residents. Conversion of forest or bush to export-crop plantations places more pressure on existing resources (including legally protected areas) for poor residents lacking alternative means of livelihood. And it fuels resentment when scarce resources continue to flow predominantly to international, national, and local elites, and to exports.

Watching the process of "development" and reflecting on the ecotourism project in the village, a Gales Point resident asks, "Why should we respect the government and its rules for hunting when they are cutting in the reserve? We know it; we see it."

### CONTESTED LESSONS: WHOSE MEANING, WHOSE BENEFIT?

The lessons drawn from community-based ecotourism in Gales Point are not self-evident, nor are they uncontested. In the eyes of project coplanner Dale Greenlee, there were problems encountered in the Gales Point community ecotourism project that centered around the failure of instituting wildlife conservation, and the blame is largely placed on the community itself. While acknowledging encroachment and other threats created by vacation home development and the construction of the Manatee Road, he nonetheless chides the community for its inability to work "coop-

eratively," "logically," and pointedly toward the goal of "conservation." In an interview with our students in April 1996, he shared some of the following reflections:

This village doesn't know how to cooperate. Gales Point villagers want to do things on their own.

The buoy system which was set up to protect the manatee . . . was taken apart and taken down by the village immediately after [the landscape architect] left. She was the one who orchestrated that effort with the full cooperation and consent of the village. But as soon as [she] left they cut the ropes and took out the buoys. Villagers continue to overfish and use gill nets. Why don't they ride each other to stop? They all know its bad but say its not their business.

To me, ecotourism and this whole cooperative was about manatee conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat. The social framework of this village is interesting, for outside people to come and experience a Creole village on its own terms. It is a draw. But the real draw is and has been the manatee, the turtles and the monkeys up river—the whole environment. This is an incredibly diverse ecosystem around here where several ecosystem types are joined together in this estuary. It's a wonderful place and that whole concept has been swept aside. Nobody is talking about that anymore.

Former executive director of the Belize Audubon Society Dolores Godfrey (herself of Mayan descent) also acknowledges that a particular cultural context informs the project in Gales Point and its shortcomings. However, rather than focusing on its "uncooperativeness," she emphasizes the community's construction historically from the mixing of escaped slaves, renegades, and urban elites, along with the absence of common-managed property resource regimes and the difficulties in conserving species such as the manatee. She is also sensitive to the different optics employed by Western environmentalists and their gaze on Belizean nature and community. She makes the following observations (1994):

Horwich and others were very well meaning, but they were not capable of communicating with villagers about their conservation plans. They tried to build them around a "community lifestyle" in Gales Point. But in fact there are many life styles in that village. Culture is not static.

The original idea was that tourists would convey a conservation ethic to B&B providers and guides, and in that way people in Gales Point would be too self-conscious and stop doing things which hurt the environment. But there was too much pressure from the outside to stop collecting turtle eggs, as an example; it was if they were always making a religious confession. I had hoped that the project would bring money to the community, not salvation.

Yes, people in Gales Point would talk about the value of conservation. But it was a pseudo-conservation ethic. Horwich and the ecotourists always telling the villagers not to kill or hunt, and were actually turning the residents against them and conservation

with all their urging. What was needed really was educating the tourists about wildlife in that place, that hunting is okay.

The Caribbean tourist industry also laments shortcomings of "locals," particularly their "poor attitude" and "service performance gap" and interprets the problem pragmatically as an educational exercise in which the burden and learning process is placed on the Caribbean national rather than on the tourist. But as Dolores Godfrey questions, who really needs to be educated?

I suggest a different optic. Polly Paullo (1996) in *Last Resorts* reminds us that many of the "problems" associated with the Caribbean tourist industry can be viewed as stemming from a deep-seated resentment of the industry at every level of society because of its historic sociocultural associations of race, colonialism, and slavery. The difference between "service" for a wage and coerced "servitude" is subtle, and echoes of this association may be read into the dynamics of the tourist industry today; indeed, the languid behavior of black employees evokes the passive resistance practiced in slavery. That in Gales Point resistance to ecotourism is louder and clearer may be linked to its escaped slave past and historic ability to subsist from the natural resource base. The all-white American planners ignore this history as they impose a form of cooperation and environmental ethic foreign to the place and peoples of Gales Point.

While the movement has been "based" in the community, it was not initiated there, and it involved neither historic social traditions of cooperation/common management nor local understandings of nature and wildlife. When viewed through the variable optics of women and men in the village, it can be seen that rather than resolving conflicts between environmental conservation and local development, the Gales Point Manatee Community Conservation project has reinforced historic conflicts within the community, with the state, and with global forces, and it has created new ironies and vulnerabilities. The rights and welfare of the poorest households, those not aligned with the proper political party or traditional elite families, are not advanced by this effort. Furthermore, women in the households who are benefiting are encountering new work burdens and conflicts. The community-based conservation/ecotourism discourse fails to specify class and gender-associated impacts.

No wonder nods of approval are replaced by acts of outward resistance when planners leave, even though they take with them opportunities for political patronage and development aid, which were the reasons the villagers had joined the associations and had taken up ecotourism activities in the first place. Resistance also symbolizes rejection of factional disputes, which deepened in Gales Point, between those who benefit from and thus support rural ecotourism, and those who are left out or who reject what the project symbolizes.

Thus I doubt that there ever was "full cooperation and consent of the village" for ecotourist and conservation activities. Rather, I suggest that the periodic display of acquiescence was a performance necessary for accessing new sources of resources, such as loans. I do not think that residents are unaware of the ecological consequences of using gill nets or hunting certain species aggressively. On the con-

trary, they continue to use the nets and not stop their neighbors from doing so because of (1) a deep appreciation of their mutual limited control over fishing grounds before the Manatee Lodge began operation (or over farmland before the White Pine citrus plantation), and (2) a steady decline in their standard of living.

There is much to suggest that rural ecotourism in Gales Point particularly, and in Belize more widely, has become a key commodity, packaged and sold largely to an international middle-class consumer. What is being sold is a Western, idealized *image of tropical rurality and exotic culture devoid of the ugliness associated with real Third World poverty, inequities, and globalization*. In their consumption of "natural" Belize, international tourists bypass the reality of British colonialism, slavery, racism, and extensive forest extraction, farming, and gathering. Bypassing the reality transforms what northern visitors "see," and enables them to experience a "natural" forest landscape and a "natural" Belize. Tourists flock to the celebrated Mayan ruins while ignoring the living real-world Mayans economically and politically marginalized around the edges of national parks and protected forests. Although brochures, promotional videos, and ecotourist B&Bs celebrate and manipulate images of rural Belizeans and the subsequent emergence of a "new and improved" community-based ecotourism, they represent, in contrast, a new and more subtle form of domination.

## NOTES

1. Manatees are plant-eating, aquatic mammals that can grow to be thirteen feet long and weigh up to 4,000 pounds. They have no natural predators.

2. See Belsky (1999) for a more thorough discussion of the rise of ecotourism in conservation and economic development policy in Belize.

3. Belize was granted its political independence from Britain in 1981.

4. I was told that Paul Merrick, an American owner of the lumber mill, brought the gill nets to Gales Point for his son to use (cost, \$400.00). While in the States, villagers purchased nets, which they brought back for use in Gales Point.

5. A large gibnut can weigh over sixteen pounds, and one pound of gibnut can fetch B12\$4 dollars in the village or B12\$5 to \$6 in Belize City.

6. See Belsky (1999) for a discussion of the rise and incorporation of community ecotourism discourse in Belizean development planning more generally.

7. In 1996, Belize was placed on the U.S. warning list of countries known to be engaged in illegal drug trafficking.

8. A popular tour book on Belize names it as *A Natural Destination* (Mahler and Wotkyns 1991).

9. Limited food self-sufficiency is a historic outcome of colonial and current government policies. Consequently, there is a large dependency on imported foods, from England and more recently from the United States.

10. See Belsky (1999) for a more detailed analysis of the B&B operations, and the contradictions between community-based ecotourism and global political-economic forces in Belize.

11. A similar incident occurred in the village of Maya Center, which was relocated to its

present site when the Cockscomb Jaguar Preserve was created. Assisted by Belize Audubon and others to develop crafts to sell to tourists who must pass by on the way to the preserve, we were told by some community members that the craft center was torched by some members of the craft association, who felt that their products were not being displayed and promoted as strongly as others'. During interviews our group held in the village, we learned that there was great resentment over the economic rise of a few families, which runs contrary to the Mayan tradition of sharing and homogeneity, and that divisions also overlaid deeper and stronger community rifts based on religious affiliations.

12. Before a brief visit by UDP officials earlier in that year, villagers weeded and cleaned the grounds, hoping to get additional funds to finish the project. However, a UDP official said he would not provide funding until its land tenure status could be clarified. The project planners expected someone from the community to obtain this information, and as of now the issue is still unresolved and the hotel is "left sitting in the weeds."