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Touring the natural world - on being in and out of place

Andrew Garner
Department of Anthropology
University College London

Abstract:

With renewed interest in landscape, place and space certain writers have recently proposed that any process of being in a place is shaped rather more by displacement, continuous movement and memory than through any sense of rooted identity. An example often used to illustrate these points are tourists visiting heritage sites. 'Heritage' in its broadest sense encompasses a sense of stasis, an attempt (however unsuccessful) to freeze a moment, to maintain an authorised vision such that others, later, can access and experience them in a similar way. The claim that contemporary experience is about displacement and continuous movement provides a basis for re-examining processes that both create and challenge a 'heritage' hegemony. Using the example of eco-tourists visiting an Amerindian village, processes creating and countering a 'natural' heritage landscape are examined. This raises questions about being in and out of place, about claiming roots and identity by reference to other places and times, and hence about landscapes that include and exclude.

Introduction

In 1992 a small item appeared in the environment column of the *Telegraph* in Britain. "Forte Crest abuse Amerindian rights", it claimed, summarising a Survival International report on a recent 'eco-tourism' development in Guyana, South America. This development took place on Amerindian land a mile up-stream from the village of Santa Mission, about four and a half hours by car and boat from the capital, Georgetown. Tourists regularly stopped off at the village on their way up to their lodge - to see, as the brochure has it, a 'real' Amerindian village before spending a few days in the 'untouched' rainforest. The gist of the Survival International report was

that the General Manager of Forte Crest, Georgetown, had conned the Amerindians into allowing access to a plot of land for private personal use. They then built a comfortable 'safari-style' lodge *Timberhead*, where they entertained business travellers for substantial amounts of money, particularly in comparison to the risible sums that the Amerindians were receiving in return for the use of their land and village[1]. On the other hand tourists described their experiences[2] as 'wonderful' thanking the Amerindians for allowing them to visit such an 'untouched, natural environment'. They comment particularly on the cleanliness and 'naturalness' of the village and exhort the Amerindians to protect their 'simple way of life' in their 'corner of paradise'.

The experience of Santa Mission will be familiar to many working in the field of tourism or development. In recent years similar developments have been initiated all over the world with varying degrees of commercial success. In this essay I take one aspect, ideas of naturalness, and examine how these are deployed in what we might call practices of space. Ideas of naturalness, it is argued, are an important way in which being *in place* is expressed. However, being in place, being 'at home' and located within a landscape, is not necessarily a straightforward concept. The Amerindians seem to be relatively 'in place' - but actually are not so 'settled' as might be imagined. Consequently, part of the issue is about registering, along a number of different scales, the relative power of representations of naturalness and how these are connected to relationships with the landscape.

'Natural' landscapes seem to be gaining in social and ideological importance in direct relationship to increased concern about global environmental change (Beck 1992, 1996, Bell 1994, Dunlap, Gallup & Gallup 1993, Grove-White 1997). Landscapes thought of as natural, are attracting growing legislative protection and developing new alternatives for commercial exploitation. In Britain we need only think of the road protests that use sites deemed as particularly good examples of natural landscape to stage their resistance (Macnaghten and Urry 1998:62ff). We could also mention World Heritage sites, national parks (Greenwood 1994, Robinson 1994), game reserves, wilderness areas, sites of special scientific interest (SSSI's), even of the recognition and development of natural sites within major cities, as examples of this increased concern. However, ideas of 'naturalness' are not simply a set of discrete ideas to be discussed by academics. They emerge directly in material culture as physical areas, actual boundaries, spaces where there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of behaving and that, in turn, structure the ways in which we (re-) think the space. In order to limit the potential range a discussion of 'natural' landscapes might cover, I focus mainly on visitors' discourse and on the reactions of the 'hosts'. My primary example of a 'natural' landscape is the ecotourism project at Santa Mission, but certain issues raised are then explored through the exchanges between staff and guest in international hotels in the Sinai, Egypt - a 'natural' desert

[1] In 1992 the cost per person for the first night at *Timberhead* was USD150. The hotel estimated that they had a minimum of 800 paying guests over the year and that most had stayed for at least two nights or more. The village of Santa Mission received about USD 1000 in lease payments and curio sales over a season.

[2] All quotes were taken from the Visitors' Book kept for two years in the Medical Centre and then in the Handicraft building on Santa Mission. Over the last four years, almost all visitors have been invited to write comments in the book. This document records both negative and positive comments (by far the majority) about Santa Mission.

environment. These prompt, in the conclusion, a series of questions to be asked in my current research on forests in Britain.

Two different lines of thought are brought together. In one direction lies the process of 'naturalising' the objects of the tourist's attention (the Amerindian villagers themselves becoming a colourful addition to the 'natural' scenery in Guyana). This is a process that attempts to fix, hold still, authenticate, authorise and conserve aspects of the landscape that are deemed desirable to particular groups of people. 'Nature' and what is 'natural' become the means of authorising a landscape in which locals become part of the view rather than owning and determining the landscape themselves.

In the other direction, and seemingly opposed, is the contention that in order to make sense of contemporary experience we need to confront travel, dislocation and continuous movement. Identity and location, it is claimed, reflect not so much a process of establishing roots, but rather a constant, fluid comparative relationship with other times and places (Clifford 1997, Rojek and Urry 1997). This perspective throws open the interaction between locals and visitors, insiders and incomers because it allows no easy drawing of boundaries between these groups. Rather it emphasises processes of interchange, of mobile identities and travelling cultures, and of one means through which landscapes are contested. Ultimately, I hope to show how certain practices of space - those that refer to other contexts, places and times - are an increasingly important modality in differing relationships to landscape and thus to processes of inclusion and exclusion.

The 'landscape' of this paper is as follows. First, preparatory comments place the discussion in the context of the conference, and draw important distinctions between forms of displacement, exile and movement. Then two arguments are briefly rehearsed: the indivisibility of nature and culture, and, secondly, how a natural landscape is constituted - illustrating links and fault lines between a visitors' heritage drive and local perceptions. However, this formulation does not sufficiently account for aspects of movement, of travelling identities and cultural translations which also take place in this nexus. It is suggested that one way these are articulated is in conversations between locals and visitors and that these conversations are increasingly important in subverting a 'natural heritage' discourse.

Heritage, dispossession and landscape

How does a paper dealing with heritage and tourism fit into a conference on landscapes of exile and displacement, of movement and diaspora, of inclusiveness and exclusiveness? Surely it is too 'light' and not sufficiently engaged with 'death and dispossession'. What is clear in the case of Santa Mission is that the 'heritage' drive of the tourists to see 'real' wilderness and 'authentic' villagers, to consume the natural heritage, is undercut by physical, economic and cultural dispossession. It is physical in the sense that the land surrounding *Timberhead* is simply no longer available for farming, hunting and fishing or logging - the main modes of subsistence on Santa until tourists started to visit. Economic, in the sense that despite the major changes in

their livelihoods bought about by the advent of tourism[3], most of the villagers have less control over their incomes. Tourism is very seasonal and Forte Crest holds the purse strings. Connected to this is an increase in wealth differentials - a few families are profiting greatly at the expense of others. Cultural, in the sense that under pressure from the hoteliers, new buildings in the village have started to be roofed in the traditional Truli-leaf (that tourists like) rather than the corrugated iron that the villagers prefer. It is relatively easy to say that the villagers' landscape and their relationship to it have undergone subtle, but nevertheless substantial, changes in the face of increased numbers of visitors.

On the other hand, there is now evidence from other tourist destinations to indicate the insufficiency of the claim that tourists are part of a global phenomenon that is slowly, but *inevitably*, dispossessing people of their homes, their societies and their cultures. Boissevain (1992, 1996), for instance, notes that mass tourism, rather than causing an atrophying of local cultural practices in Malta, has resulted in a kind of renaissance of community rituals. This he suggests is in part a result of these events gaining in political capital. Picard (1992) studying tourism development in Bali suggests that a cultural revival, particularly in the arts and religious celebrations, has come at the cost of political and economic independence. More recently Waldren (1996), in her intimate portrayal of the Mallorcan town of Deià, has this to say:

> Drawing on traditional aspects of their past, insiders have found ways to combat the disruptions caused by outsiders; their sense of place and a consciousness of local distinctiveness are products of their relations with the outside world rather than the result of isolation. (ix)

It is important, then, to draw some distinctions. This paper is about landscapes and constructions of dislocation and movement and the counter moves to fix, locate and hold still. But, it is not about the harsh realities of politically motivated exile, of physically enforced dislocation and the resultant migrations and diasporas. Consequently, it is necessary to keep notions of exile and various forms of refugee status at a conceptual distance rather than to run the risk of eliding two clearly different and morally disparate events. However, it is worth remembering that there are very clear historical examples where processes of 'fixing' people in a natural landscape have been used to de-legitimise their claims to land, wealth, status, and indeed their very humanity[4].

Thinking about 'natural' landscapes

The Western[5] scientific tradition defined itself by radically splitting the object of appropriate investigation - nature in all her guises- from the detached (usually male) observer (Merchant 1982). The same can be said of the ways in which landscapes are

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[3] A survey of the main economic occupations of adults on Santa Mission showed that tourism was the second biggest reported sector after farming - and this only two years after the first regular tourists started to arrive.

[4] Early European settlers in Guyana for instance viewed the Amerindians as little more than savages. Their chief complaint, however, was that unlike the African slaves, the Amerindians did not take to enforced labour on the sugar estates. They either slipped away into the jungle, or faded into death. (Menezes, Sr. N. 1977).

[5] It has become fashionable to preface the use of the shorthand 'West' and 'Western' with provisos about the heterogeneity that such a limited term obscures. Let me do the same, and note that it still provides a useful, if limited, shorthand.

generally discussed in the West. As Bender puts it, 'we tend to focus on the surface of the land, and to talk of things done to the land, of culture dominating nature' (1998:40). In other societies and at other times, nature and landscape have been shown to be understood in very different ways (Brody 1981, Oelschlaeger 1991, Scully 1962, Taçon 1991, Tilley 1994 to name but a few). If landscape can be so diverse in construction it is worthwhile turning the focus back onto our own cultural constructions - particularly on how nature is itself (herself, might be more correct - and revealing) is fabricated[6] in relation to humans.

Milton (1993) in her book on anthropology and nature introduces a broad premise which has underpinned most investigations into the relationship between humans and nature - that culture 'is *the* mechanism through which humans interact with (or, more controversially, *adapt to,* their environment.'(p.4). Two distinct perspectives have evolved from this broad claim. Firstly, and one that Milton clearly dismisses, is what might be called 'ecological determinism' where the environment provides natural limitations on human action. Here cultural phenomena exist to serve the needs of ecological adaptation (but see Moran 1990 on maladaptive cultural practices). What people think of their environments either does not matter (Tilley 1994:22), or is previously determined by processes of ecological adaptation. It is interesting to note, however, that Milton wishes to retain questions on whether cultural practices are 'environmentally adaptive' or not, as she sees that these relate to a search for a 'sustainable culture'- one that is 'environmentally benign'. Inherent in this desire, and despite her rejection of this position, is the idea that more or less benign cultural systems can overlay the physical environment. In a similar vein Macnaghten and Urry (1998) point to the pervasive influence of what they call 'environmental realism' - the idea that the environment is essentially a real entity separate from social practices and human experience that can be scientifically researchable.

Secondly, and in general opposition, are the arguments that fall under the perspective of what Milton calls 'cultural determinism'. In this perspective the world is defined through cultural perceptions. Sapir (1961) puts this bluntly:

> [T]he worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds not merely the same world with different labels attached. (69)

For Tilley, this ‘culturalist’ point of view is one that focuses on symbolic and cognitive ordering of space where 'the physical environment is merely backdrop to the unconstrained ramifications of the human mind' (1994:22). Ingold (1992, 1993) and Milton (1993) both feel uncomfortable with this. Ingold sees this as divorcing a series of cultural worlds from a shared physical world. Milton argues that as environmental problems are increasingly seen as global, there has to be room for cross-cultural translation of landscapes. Especially, she points out, as:

[6] My aim here is not to review the literature on the cultural history of concepts of 'nature' in the 'West' but for those interested the following might serve as a starting point. Glacken (1967) for a comprehensive earlier view, Cosgrove (1993) on Greek creation myths and landscape, Oelschlaeger (1991) who traces the idea of wilderness from prehistory to today, Merchant (1982) on gender aspects of nature and science, Williams (1972) on ideas of nature, and Macnaghten and Urry (1998) for a recent review.

> Contemporary communication media transcend barriers of distance, language, nationality and ethnic origin, creating dimensions of cultural complexity which challenge established anthropological models of social reality
> Hannerz 1992 quoted in Milton p5

Tilley, however, thinks it unhelpful to polarize 'as Ingold appears to, ...practical activity and the cultural world of explication and discourse' (1994:23). He goes on:

> Perception of the world and the constitution of that which is important or unimportant to people does not work in terms of a 'blank environmental slate' on which perception and cognition sets to work, but in terms of the historicity of lived experiences in the world.... [T]he relationship between people and [landscape] is a constant dialectic and process of structuration: the landscape is both medium *for* and outcome *of* action and previous histories of action. Landscapes are experienced in practice, in life activities. (Tilley 1994: 23)

Both doing/being and explaining/justifying are intrinsic to the construction of the environment[7]. If this is the case, it must follow that it is virtually impossible to think of 'nature' as a blank environmental slate into which, on which and through which perceptions and constitutions of landscape play out. *By the very opposition of nature and culture we are already engaged in structuration*, already fully in the process of reacting to previous histories of action. To consider 'natural' landscapes, then, must mean dropping into an already active medium, to take into account previous cultural constructions of 'nature' in dialectic relationship with the physical forms of the landscape. In the next section the matrix of current and historical cultural constructions of the physical environment are discussed in relationship to Santa Mission.

Tourist Perceptions and Indigenous Realities

> 'I envy your life. Please don't let anything change'
> Visitors' Book Santa Mission

The trips to *Timberhead* take place within the discursive field of 'ecotourism'. The government report on tourism development (1992) in Guyana argues that as Guyana are not able to compete with the rest of the Caribbean in the 'sunshine and beaches' market, ecotourism is the preferred way forward to exploit Guyana's natural resources. The brochures advertising *Timberhead*, describe it as being built out of local materials and with local labour, indicating and building on ideas of naturalness and harmony with the local environment. The marketing of Forte Crest's lodge appealed to the tourists' desire to visit a tropical jungle, experience the sights and sounds of a 'natural' wilderness forest and drop in on a 'traditional' Amerindian village. Newspapers tell of a Guyanese river, 'an aorta swiftly linking the traveller to a heart of darkness', of 'close encounters with jumping vipers...[which] served to remind

[7] Brody (1981) tries to makes a similar point in explaining the decision making process of a Beaver hunter. 'To make a good, wise, sensible hunting choice is to accept the interconnection of all possible factors, and avoids the mistake of seeking rationally to focus on any one consideration that is held as primary. What is more, the decision is taken in the doing: there is no step or pause between theory and practice. As a consequence, the decision - like the action from which it is inseparable - is always alterable (and therefore may not properly even be termed a decision) (p.37).

us that this is serious wilderness' (Telegraph 1994), brochures describe 'Beautiful unspoilt rainforest' (Guy Tours brochure, 1994), a place where 'no signs of civilisation clutter the primeval landscape' (Liat Islander, Issue 26 April 1992:11) but where you can be looked after 'by a gentle Amerindian family from the area' (ibid. 18). The similarity of these descriptions to many other tourism examples worldwide prompts the thought that, as Selwyn (1995) has argued, there is something deeply mythic about these constructions of place and people.

However, most visitors to Santa mission see themselves as atypical tourists. Indeed, from what indicators are available[8] most visitors to Santa Mission were highly aware of issues of environment and sustainability. The majority are from embassies, various international government agencies, and researchers of one sort or another for development NGOs. Others are Guyanese living overseas who are on holiday visiting friends and relatives. If what attracted them was the environmental aspects - the 'ecotourism' label so to speak - their responses are less easy to identify. Pálsson (1996) attempts to divide human environmental relations into three paradigmatic forms; orientalist, paternalist and communalist. This bears a similarity to Merchant (1990) who divides environmental ethics into egocentric, homocentric and ecocentric approaches. Neither of these approaches fits well as a way of describing the visitors to Santa Mission. Putting it another way, it is relatively easy to plunder the available data to illustrate all three paradigmatic forms and ethical approaches. While these are useful to highlight certain constructions, they do not, to my mind, satisfactorily explore how discursive fields become practiced landscapes with right and wrong ways of acting, looking and being in them. If environmentalism/ecotourism is the larger discursive field it is in the minutia of practicing space that this landscape becomes emerges. The next section examines how a 'tourist' landscape is constructed.

A Visitors trip[9]

Description

For most visitors to Santa Mission and *Timberhead* the journey starts with a forty-minute trip up the main road from Georgetown to Timehri airport following the Demerara River. At Timehri Stelling[10] a speedboat then takes them rapidly across the expanse of the Demerara before plunging between the trees on the opposite bank into a narrow, winding river. For much of the trip the jungle meets overhead leaving the river in cool green shade. Some trips include a short visit to a 'Rastafarian family' with a quick tour of their ramshackle house and their cultivated plot of land. On the way upstream the visitor notices small homesteads and an occasional dugout canoe with the occupants hanging onto branches as the wake from the speedboat washes past. A wasp nest is pointed out, various useful plants and trees are described - this one is good for roofs, that one is calming; here is the Greenheart tree - 'it makes very beautiful furniture', we are told. Another one over there is good for making canoes. There might be brief glimpses of parrots overhead, or leaf ants walking along a log.

[8] Government arrival statistics, the Visitor's Book at Santa Mission, descriptions by the owners of *Timberhead* of where most of their clients come from and descriptions of the same thing by the villagers, together give a rough indication of the majority of Santa's visitors.

[9] This description is an amalgamation of three tourist trips I accompanied and descriptions given by other tourist of similar trips.

[10] 'Stelling' - commonly used description for a dock and surrounding platform area.

At some point new visitors remark on the blackness of the water. This is a result of all the vegetation and, it is added, the water is very pure: 'try some', the guide suggests. Later, either prompted by the guide or by the questions of the tourists, the impact of industrial mining and logging are discussed. Amerindian methods of using forest resources are highlighted in comparison.

Eventually, in the late afternoon, the visitors round another sharp bend to be faced with a stunning white sandy slope, at the base of which some canoes are pulled up. Looking up the slope between the large trees there is a sense of more open areas, of sunlight splashing down rather than a muted filtering. A white clapboard-faced building can be seen behind the tree, and another a little further on. Sometimes children, if they are not required for work elsewhere, are playing on the sandy slope near the water. The visitors are led twenty metres up the slope, and at the top much of Santa Mission is visible. The clapboard building they first noticed is the Anglican Church. Like most building on Santa it is built about four feet off the ground on poles. On their left a large open sandy area leads up, past the more substantial house of the family with connections to Timberhead (it has concrete foundations) to the brick building that serves as the Medical Centre. Few notice the small building, partially hidden by another slope downward on their right.

The Amerindians are very proud of the Medical centre with its spotlessly clean consulting room, tapped water and flushing toilet. Until recently the Visitor's Book was kept here. On the way up to the Medical Centre visitors catch glimpses of women and men moving or resting in the background and in darkened interiors made more stark by the bright sunlight and white sand. No one comes directly to greet the visitors. By the time they have seen the Medical Centre they are eager to wander over to the nearby building with its Truli leaf roof and timbered sides. Here they have an opportunity to buy baskets, grass fans, shakers and small reproductions of canoes, bows and arrows and cassava presses. Many visitors take the opportunity to ask questions about the village: 'How many people? What is the roof made of? What do you eat? Do you mind tourists visiting?' Afterwards they are led slowly back down through the village. Some might be shown a shared cooking space enclosed on three sides by woven mats, others might be invited to look at a full size press used to squeeze the poisonous juices from the bitter cassava roots. Some comment on the spotlessly clean areas around the homes[11]. Finally, just before heading back down the slope to the boats, the visitors notice a small 'traditional' house - the one they missed before. This has one side open, is roofed with Truli leaves, has walls made of a mixture of untreated rough cut timbers and woven mats. For most, this is a photo-opportunity not to be missed. Returning to the boat the visitors sometimes take a dip in the river before continuing up the last few miles to Timberhead itself.

An Interpretation: trees and Amerindians

Starting with the 'ecotourism' label and the images of Guyana in the media, the visitors quickly grow accustomed to the idea of 'nature displayed'. While travelling in the boat, novel aspect of birds, plants and insects are brought to their attention. Homesteads are shown to them in the same way - part of the natural scenery - embedded in the rhythm and flows of natural life. The harmony of the 'way of life' of the Amerindians is presented in direct contrast to the depredations of gold-mining and

[11] These are swept clear of leaves and rubbish once a week, normally on Sunday morning.

industrial logging. The fact that other people live in and use this natural world in ways that are constructed as different allows the Amerindians to be elided into the general 'exoticism' of the natural environment.

Arriving at the village the route taken by the visitors is both 'disciplined' by the guides and a result of previous practice. I asked how the route through the village had been decided and was informed that once one or two visitors had stopped of their own accord to admire the truli leaf buildings, or expressed delight at seeing a cassava press or cooking area, the guides and villagers began to suggested this themselves. The visitors are effectively shown round the perimeter of the large open space seeing, in order, the church, a large house, the medical centre, the handicraft centre, other houses with traditional activities, and a 'traditional' house. The village emerges as a series of buildings with important village roles set around an open space. This is deceptive. For the Amerindians most of their movement took place under the trees along the paths linking homes together and homes to the farms. The open space was generally avoided. In contrast to the 'centred' village of the visitors, the Amerindian landscape is a series of relational (kinship and friendship) links written onto accustomed paths and routes which rarely crossed the 'public' space of the visitors.

The sense of nostalgic harmony is reinforced for the visitors because they normally arrive at Santa Mission in the late afternoon. The quality of light is much softer than during the rest of the day. It is also the time of day when most villagers are back from their farms or the river relaxing, or preparing the evening meal. Villagers 'at ease' serve to augment a perception of harmony with each other and with the environment. For the visitors, nature laps at the wooden walls of the houses, it seeps in through truli-leaf roofs (as opposed to perceived 'ugliness' of industrialised corrugated iron) and exudes from the Amerindians themselves. The measure of the natural landscape relies on local-ness to animate it. It requires 'locals', it needs to be dwelt in, and people have to have ascribed 'roots' and imagined 'homes' to allow the natural environment to emerge for the visitors.

We might speculate further. Bloch (1998) in a recent collection argues that the apprehension of trees involves a certain set of basic cognitive processes - 'cognitive anchoring' (p.53). The remarkable regularity in aspects of cross-cultural tree and plant symbolism revolve around learned conceptualisations of 'life' and 'not-life'. Bloch is at pains to emphasise that this anchoring cannot fully account for the phenomena themselves - the anchoring itself, 'a theory of life', applies 'differentially and contextually to different types of beings' (ibid. p.53). Visitors, experience a landscape that is made up of two basic materials, the trees that form a constant jungle backdrop and the narrow water-way through which they travel. The trees physically impose themselves onto the visitor's landscape, enclosing the river, dimming and greening the sunlight, growing through areas set aside for habitation and farming that they are shown. The visitors are in no doubt that what they are observing is fecund tropical forest. (It is, in fact, largely secondary growth having been systematically farmed and logged over the last half century). In noticing and commenting on the natural 'life' represented inexhaustibly by the forest, visitors metaphorically link trees to the 'natural' lifestyles of the Amerindians. In the visitors' discourse, the Amerindians are rooted in similar ways to the landscape, part of a timeless cycle of life and death in which the trees are used to provide transport, shelter, home and food. The trees and the Amerindians become a metaphorical resource of and for each other.

What is natural is what is perceived as being in harmony with the (or rather, *their imagined*) living forest environment. The landscape visitors imagine emerges, too, in their comments. Some express surprise at how 'western' the Amerindian clothes are, others comment favourably on cassava presses and the 'ingenious' use of wood, bark and natural fibres. Rice and cassava bread[12] are 'natural' local colour in ways that coke cans and sweets can never be. Schools and medical centres are important and recognised as part of a positive development process, but the desire for television sets (seen in the large house) and urban living is not.

The symbolic phraseology of the 'natural' landscape, eliding as it does trees and people, also obscures another effect. The natural landscape is one where 'past-ness' is valued over and above present change - or, rather, previous changes are subject to conceptual freezing and attempts to impose stasis, an authorised view, on the way in which it is valued. In this view 'naturalness' becomes a means of appropriating time in landscape. It is worth dwelling on this point briefly and drawing a distinction between 'natural' heritage and 'historical' heritage in the landscape.

For the visitors, the historical changes through which Santa Mission emerged disappear into an unchanging, *timeless* nature. In a sense, the Amerindians, (like the primordial forest in which they live), represent a earlier form of society and so represent a 'lost innocence' for the visitors - a 'Garden of Eden' that the brochures allude to. The presence of the Amerindians, their immediate physical/emotional impact on the visitors, make the landscape both present and extremely ancient *at the same time* - they appear to live an idealised, long disappeared past. It is their presence as markers of difference that, I suggest, make this elision possible. These tourist constructions strongly echo nineteenth century social evolution scenarios in which contemporary 'primitive' societies are supposedly the fossil relics of the past. However, in 'historical' heritage sites such as Stonehenge there are no 'present-ancients' to enable the distant past to be made immediate. Stonehenge - because it is a ruin, is almost 'natural' and has 'withstood' time. However its role as part of our history and origins of our civilisation requires careful reconstruction. It is sequential, staged - a past where careful cultural work is required to make sense of the site. Of course, as Bender (1998) makes clear, this entirely begs the question of whose history is presented. At Santa the question might be whose 'timelessness' is being constructed? Because natural landscapes are perceived as 'natural' they often remain unquestioned and the heritage construction within them unexamined.

The visitors to Santa Mission, however, would not see their desire for untouched natural environment as being a palimpsest of past activity *per se*, in fact many deny this, some citing the contemporary nature of the medical centre as evidence of here and nowness. A 'natural' landscape is, afterall, just that: natural and therefore unchanging. I hope to briefly show how even the aspects most stressed as signs and metaphors of 'naturalness' at Santa are a product of previous influences and constructions.

Previous Changes in the Landscape

[12] It was actually getting very difficult to see cassava bread, as virtually no villagers were producing it. Most had adopted rice as their staple despite the cost and difficulty involved in importing it.

Being located in the landscape at Santa Mission is to be *dwelling* in a place where the practices of the past determine the possible routes of future dwelling. Santa Mission bears the physical marks of its missionised past. It has developed as a conglomeration of homes around the axis of the Church and landing beach. Unlike the scattered and perennial nature of Amerindian homesteads found further in the interior, Santa has a sense of centre (even if this is not the same as the visitors' one). This directly reflects the attempts by the missionaries to settle Amerindians into European style villages - to 'rescue' them from barbarism and to enable careful structuring of their time (Menezes, 1977, 1979). Christianity and *European* visions of civilisation went hand in hand. The Rev. William Henry Brett (b. 1818 d.1886), a remarkable campaigner on behalf of the Arawaks and deeply committed to translating the Bible, wrote that, 'Wilhelmina (an Amerindian - with a European name) had...attached herself to my household, learning from my wife what she could, that she might communicate it to the women of her race, and thereby teach them civilised habits' (Josa 1887: 74). This attempt to control the Amerindian environment extended into the realms of language and culture. Missionaries viewed clothing as an important step in asserting civilisation, at covering nakedness in the eyes of God. Along with Christianity the Amerindians slowly adopted Western style clothing. As the Bible was still not fully translated into Arawak, English was asserted as the main language (Benjamin 1987). Today, only two people can still speak fluent Arawak on Santa. Furthermore, it is impossible to ignore the effect of disease on the Amerindian population. Estimates differ but by all accounts the population as a whole had dropped nearly three-quarters by the beginning of the century (Menezes 1979, and see Forte 1990 for more recent figures). This effect would have been more marked nearer the coast and the infections brought by successive waves of immigration. Those surviving infection flowed gradually toward the new mission sites from increasingly distant areas.

Following Guyana's independence in 1966, the values espoused by the colonial government faded and the Amerindians gradually became subject to another set of values. What they ate and what they spoke and how they lived became indicators of low status in the eyes of the Afro-Caribbean and East-Indian populations, a valuing of their identity that the Amerindians found hard to ignore[13]. Gradually rice replaced cassava as a dietary staple (despite its higher cost), indigenous languages withered as simply opening their mouths served to identify them as 'bush', and Truli-leaves were a despised lesser alternative to corrugated iron (despite its rapid rusting potential and inability to disperse heat).

In recent years the effects of yet another construction of nature have been felt. As overseas visitors have valued certain aspects of their landscape, the Amerindians have started to change their minds about roofs, building materials, food stuffs, and, indeed, begun to reinvent Amerindianess[14]. At the same time the proximity to Georgetown has meant that there has been increased mingling between different population groups. Almost all families on Santa, have arrived from elsewhere, have relatives of

[13] Menezes (1982), in a brief potted social and cultural history of the Amerindians regrets their stereotyping as 'denizens of the forest', 'simple-minded, benighted, barbarous and savage' (p.7). See also Forte (1989).

[14] The establishment of several Amerindian political organisations, some allied to International Indigenous pressure groups, illustrates part of this political and cultural resurgence. For example, Guyanese Organisation for Indigenous People (GOIP) and the Amerindian Peoples Association (APA)

different ethnic groups through intermarriage, or have lived for periods of time in Georgetown or other towns along the coast. A few families have been highly mobile, Santa being just the latest in a series of moves from elsewhere in Guyana. In recent years many families have sons employed on the dredges in the gold-mining industry and who periodically return to Santa. Two people have travelled overseas to the Caribbean as tourists, and all are accustomed to development workers, government agencies, tourists and researchers. In many senses this is not new. Benjamin (1989) notes the substantial movement and migration of the Arawaks in the 16th and 17th centuries. Forte (1989) discusses the degree to which the Amerindian population today is mixed, but at the same time still distinct.

How do these observations relate to an understanding of the construction of landscape at Santa Mission? Macnagten and Urry claim that it is, 'specific social practices especially of people's *dwellings*, which produce, reproduce and transform different natures and different values' (1998:2, italics added). We can agree with them as far as this goes. However, it seems that we need to take into account more than dwelling. Constructing nature at Santa relates in equal measure to experiences of *displacement and movement.* Bender (1998) points out how phenomenological approaches build on Heidegger who emphasised the people are *beings in the world* and stressed the importance of *dwelling* in the world. While this challenges the Cartesian split of body and mind, culture and nature, and recognises the embodied experience in the world, Bender detects an almost ahistorical romanticism around being-in-the-world rooted in rural activities and past times. What happens, she asks, 'to those not rooted, not dwelling, perhaps not 'authentic"? (p.36-37) A valid question, but still premised on the notion that having roots and expressing them through modes of dwelling in the world, is the starting point.

From what has been discussed above, we could suggest the following. What it means to be 'rooted' is, in itself, not clear cut. Visitors assign a sense of rootedness to the Amerindians that emphasise naturalness and consequently certain aspects of pastness. In the process, for them, being rooted is nostalgic and timeless, harmonious and in tune with nature. For the Amerindians the forms of being rooted are less clear (if somewhat more real). If being rooted is about identity and relationship to landscape, at what point does 'Amerindian' fray into 'outsider'? If it is about situation in contemporary local and national politics, how are they able to articulate different 'roots' for different purposes? Does having a 'home' in a certain location, the village, count when this is shown to be a relatively recent innovation in rootedness in response to historical processes? How long does one need to be resident to count as rooted and part of a community? How do the experiences of being elsewhere relate to concepts of home and the creation of roots? I attempt to deal with some of these questions in the next section.

Landscape constituted through displacement

As anthropologists have long known, ‘local communities’ are far from comfortable bounded entities that share common identity or even shared development aims (even if anthropology, with its early attention to village based participant research, is itself not without blame). Rather, the ‘local community’ is imagined (Anderson 1991); an ideal that some argue reflects more a discourse in the urbanised centres of perceived alienation and lack of ‘community’ experienced in living in industrialised

metropolitan centres, than in any reality found at the level of the local. In this vision, genuine social relations are somehow more securely embedded in simpler less complex societies. However, as can be seen in the case of Santa Mission, 'community' as a creation of a 'nostalgic' urban centre is not sufficient. 'Community' may well be a creation of small-scale societies, or 'local' communities when forced, for whatever ever reason, to articulate their sense of self/place in response to questioning/threat from outside. (Bender pers. com. 07/10/98). But as much as identifying oneself as part of a 'community' might be a reaction to outside questions or threats, the *idiom* of that expression is one that politically 'works' *elsewhere*, outside of the village. 'Local community' becomes a useful articulation of self/place partly because of its currency among largely urbanised centres in which nostalgia and an environmental discourse conspire to make it culturally impactful.

What happens when culture becomes defined by movement rather than embedded in place? Clifford (1997) has recently expressed this as “dwelling-in-travel”. His argument is based on “a view of human location as constituted by displacement as much as by stasis” (pg. 2). In his preface to *Routes*, Clifford recalls Amitav Ghosh's description of an Egyptian village where everyone had travelled from somewhere.

> When I first came to that quiet corner of the Nile Delta I had expected to find on that most ancient and most settled of soils a settled and restful people. I couldn't have been more wrong. The men of the village had all the busy restlessness of airline passengers in a transit lounge. Many of them had worked and travelled in the Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf, others had been in Libya and Jordan and Syria, some had been to the Yemen as soldiers, others to Saudi Arabia as pilgrims a few had visited Europe: some of them had passports so thick they opened out like ink-blackened concertinas. And none of this was new: their grandparents and ancestors and relatives had travelled and migrated too, in much the same way as mine had, in the Indian subcontinent - because of wars, or for money and jobs, or perhaps simply because they got tired of living always in one place.
> (Ghosh 1986:135 quoted in Clifford 1997:1)

Here, common assumptions about culture – that it is rooted in localities, that it is about dwelling in circumscribed places – are challenged. The result Clifford contends is that:

> Practices of displacement might emerge as constitutive of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension.
> (1997:3)

Locality then becomes a part of the processes of constituting culture in respect to ‘elsewhere’: a tool that puts ‘where you are now’ as contingent on on-going travel; a movement that is continuously using locality in political terms, in projections forward and back to previous locations and future places.

As we have already pre-empted some of these issues so far as Santa Mission is concerned it might be useful to turn to a second example. I have previously written about relationships between workers and tourists in hotels in the Sinai, Egypt (Garner *et al* with publisher). In the Sinai hotels, perhaps even more so than Ghosh' 'village-as-transit-lounge', factors of displacement and movement come to the fore in the

interactions between guest and staff and the constructions of landscape. For most of the staff we interviewed in the hotels, the Sinai was a place they happened to be for the moment, a backdrop to their relationships with 'home' and where they would like to work and travel next. 'I came here to gain experience so that in a few years I can work overseas' was a common response among hotel staff. Equally impressive was the list of countries that some staff had already worked in. What makes Clifford's observation about the cultural role of displacement particularly telling in this context is the remarkable resemblance in form of the tourists' responses. They too, justified their visit in terms of elsewheres and elsewhens establishing dialogues with the staff in terms of comparisons with other places. It should be noted that with a few marked exceptions the hotel staff were genuinely interested in finding out about other countries and negotiated 'insider' information about 'Egyptian' mores in return for this information. Despite the pervasive use of the opposition between 'hosts' and 'guests' in the literature, part of the culture of these hotels must be a kind of knowing cosmopolitanism – a series of brief exchanges between staff and tourists that play on shared experiences of being displaced. The beginnings of the same process can be identified in the ability of the villagers at Santa Mission to selectively refer to their experiences of other places and other people, points of common experience with the visitors, in their dialogues. What sets the tone is, as Clifford has it, "Routes rather than roots" (1997:3), and it, might be added, some 'routes' are more powerful than others.

While the tourists in Santa compare elsewheres and whens with the Amerindians whose own elsewheres and whens are swallowed up in a timeless 'natural' landscape, and while the hotel staff in the Sinai attempt to establish communication through shared senses of travel, the Bedouin, perhaps with the most claim to be located, rooted and dwelling in the Sinai are removed to the 'natural' landscape. For the tourists and the Egyptian staff the Bedouin become a necessary element enlivening the naturalness of a desert landscape. The Bedouin allow the desert 'out there' to be animated - traditional 'natural' lifestyles enhancing the harmony of nature. Eber and Aziz (1997) have argued that the landscape in the Sinai is split. The landscape of the tourists, with their hotels, watersports and attentive staff, separated from the landscape of the Bedouin - the desert interior - by the military presence along major routes and at junctions. While the tourists find it relatively easy to move around the Sinai, the Bedouin resort to avoiding the problems and entanglements of the military by remaining off the main routes. It could be said that the Bedouin are allowed to be nomadic only in terms of a careful proscribed, physically enforced and essentially natural landscape, however much they really travel. But, again there are tensions within this formulation. In *The Poetics of Military Occupation*, Lavie (1990) shows the Bedouin telling stories, laughing, joking about tourists, complaining about military occupation and well aware of the larger world outside. Joking about the news, one Bedouin lists some of the changes to their landscape.

> 'The Greeks were here and left behind the Monastry [Santa Katarina], the Turks were here and left behind the Castle [in Nuweb'a Tarabin], and the British drew up maps, and the Egyptians brought the Russian army (and a few oil wells), and the Israelis brought the Americans who made the mountains into movies, and tourists from France and Japan and scuba divers from Sweden and Australia, and trust Allah to save you from the devil, we Mzeina are nothing but pawns in the hands of them all. We are like pebbles and the droppings of the Shiza'. Everyone but Shgetef again roars with laughter. (1990:291)

Conclusion

Starting with the visitors to Santa Mission and going on to interactions between staff and guests in the Sinai hotels I have been suggesting that a simple separation into constructions of landscape as natural heritage by visitors on the one hand and counter constructions by hosts on the other is not sufficient. I have suggested that one vector that deserves more attention is how relationships to movement and displacement are subtlely fielded/owned/displayed in ways that require others to become naturalised - part of the natural landscape - and consequently truly displaced. And conversely, how those being 'naturalised' subvert these discourses, attempt to turn heritage to their own advantage, and engage in travelling of their own. This has implications for notions of dwelling and being in place. The Amerindians seem to be firmly in place at one level and yet, at another, recent incomers. One key way of investigating how discourses of travel identity are entering the production of landscape is through the details of conversations between more or less displaced 'travellers'. Between, that is to say, the travelling 'knowledges' of the Amerindians or the Egyptian staff or Bedouin and their visitors, tourists and guests. Waldren's (1996) ethnography on the Mallorcan town of Deiá does go some way in investigating these issues. She shows how forms of address, naming of houses, and fictive kinships are used in interactions with incomers to both establish community boundaries *and* at other times claim degrees of incorporation, and shared interests (Ch 5, p.138 ff). Yet, in all the examples used so far, there is a relatively easy process of labelling who are the insiders and who the outsider. While using the concepts of displacement and travel destabilises these categories and highlights aspects of the construction of identity in landscape, the dialectic insider/outsider remains.

In my current research I am investigating constructions and conceptions of forest landscapes in Britain with reference to their leisure use. It is often not clear at all who should be counted as local, incomer or visitor, or by what method people embedded in complex relationships with other people, places and times should be assigned these categories. It also appears through preliminary research on a peri-urban forest in north London that constructions of the natural wooded landscape owe a great deal to memories of past times and other places, friendship, love and kinship, and to ambivalent senses of ownership. While 'localness' and 'rootedness' become claims to belong to the landscape, (and also of those whose opinions, because they are not local, don't count), these sort of claims are couched in terms of a remembered 'golden' past - in a sense a travelling landscape in *time* rather than distance. It then becomes pertinent to investigate how memories of other times and places are fielded and owned in relationship to certain forested landscapes. Does localness and rootedness cross over significantly with senses of travel and dislocation, and in what ways? How do these link into or contest 'authorised' constructions? Do claims to rootedness in a landscape vary in relationship to 'theories of life' as Bloch suggests? In what ways do the practice of 'routes' and the invention of roots, relate to constructions of inclusive and exclusive landscapes? In Britain it is virtually impossible to ignore the legalistic framework and the historic development of these landscapes. Equally, these frameworks emerge through and are effected by actions and conversations with and between people claiming and using the forests. It is in the way in which legalistic, historical, active and conversational modes interpenetrate and work off each other that these landscapes are made more or less inclusive or exclusive.

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