TOURISM, CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE IN CYPRUS

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Abstract: Numerous claims have been made for tourism's efficacy as a force for peace. This paper evaluates these arguments in the context of an attempt to use tourism as a confidence building measure. Findings from ethnographic research in a village tourism project in Cyprus are compared with other conflict cases. Contrasting an anthropological approach with the psychological models most commonly referred to in the tourism and peace literature, the paper argues the need to address the wider structural factors determining the strength of civil society, in particular, the functioning of reciprocity, if tourism is to drive the peace dividend, rather than just profit from it. **Keywords:** Cyprus, peace, confidence-building, civil society, agritourism, anthropology. © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

My intention in this paper is to reflect on the use of tourism to achieve political ends, specifically, its capacity to contribute to peace and post-conflict reconciliation in the divided island of Cyprus. Conflict has been a feature of life in Cyprus for sixty years or more, since the armed struggle, from the 50s onwards, to remove the British colonial government, gave way, post 1960 independence, to clashes between the two main ethno-national groups, fuelled by the interventions of the respective Greek and Turkish 'motherlands' (guarantors, along with Great Britain, of the independent constitution). During the 60s and 70s, the development of Cyprus as a tourist destination took place against a backdrop of intermittent, low level, inter-ethnic violence and the enclaving of the Turkish Cypriot population, of which the tourists, concentrated in coastal resorts close to Kyrenia and Famagusta, were for the most part unaware (c.f. Berner, 1992; Martin, 1993; Purcell, 1969). This changed in July 1974, when a coup

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engineered by the military junta in Athens led to the outbreak of civil war in Cyprus and invasion by Turkey, the division of the island, and subsequent exchange of populations, as most Greek Cypriots living in the northern third of the island were transferred to the south, and most Turkish Cypriots from the southern two-thirds were moved north. The subsequent stalemate has lasted for nearly four decades, during which time, sporadic violent incidents at the Green Line, which divides the island, notwithstanding, the island has been relatively peaceful, if not 'at peace'. The Republic of Cyprus (R.o.C.) is the internationally recognised government of Cyprus, but the areas under its effective administration are limited to the southern two-thirds of the island. In 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (T.R.N.C.) was unilaterally declared in the north, but remains unrecognised.

Tourism has played a major role in Cyprus's story, successfully driving its post-colonial economic development as a newly independent country, and fuelling rapid reconstruction and growing prosperity in the areas under the administration of the R.o.C. following the 1974 war (Ioannides, 1992). More ominously, it has also been an instrument of conflict, expropriation and exclusion on the island, and hence bears the stigma of complicity in the perpetuation, in post-colonial Cyprus, of the structural violence which was a feature of colonial rule, and continued, through the early days of independence, when would-be Turkish Cypriot entrepreneurs were systematically excluded from participation in tourism development on the island (Ilican, 2010; Martin, 1993), to the contemporary controversies over the use of expropriated Greek Cypriot refugee properties for tourism purposes (Scott & Topcan Mesutoğlu, 2006). In 1993 the then United Nations General Secretary Boutros-Ghali proposed that tourism cooperation could be a means of building confidence and restoring relations between the two communities (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2000). Since then, numerous researchers and commentators have pointed to the high cost exacted by the conflict on tourism both north and south, including its exacerbation of existing problems of vulnerability and dependency (Alipour & Kilic, 2003; Clements & Georgiou, 1998; Okumus, Altinay, & Arasli, 2005). The potential and the modalities for peace to benefit tourism on the island as a whole, and for tourism to contribute to peace and reconciliation, have become a focus of interest for tourism researchers (c.f. Jacobson, Musyck, Orphanides, & Webster, 2010; Musyck, Jacobson, Mehmet, Orphanides, & Webster, 2010; Webster, Musyck, Orphanides, & Jacobson, 2009).

Claims for tourism's efficacy as a force for peace rest on four particular ideas about the nature of tourism and the processes associated with it. Firstly, tourism is said to encourage *person-to-person contact*, thus providing opportunities for dialogue and the development of mutual understanding; secondly, it is argued that tourism facilitates the *crossing of boundaries and borders*, an important element supporting education for peace; thirdly, peace is said to make *commercial sense* for tourism, thus appealing to the enlightened self-interest of tourism practitioners and policy makers; fourthly, the perceived incompatibility of tourism and war makes tourism a strong *symbol* of a return to peace and