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## Power, altruism and communitarian tourism: A comparative study

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**Abstract:** Residents of San Juan La Laguna and San Pedro La Laguna, neighboring towns on the shores of Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, have followed very different trajectories of tourism development despite their close proximity. This study explores residents' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of tourism development under two differing economic models and addresses weaknesses in current theoretical approaches. Findings from this ethnographic comparative case study indicate that prevailing theoretical constructs do not fully explain dynamics in non-western non- laissez faire capitalist contexts. Findings also suggest that strong community collaboration guided by governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can help to maintain tourism benefits locally, while at the same time preventing some of the costs of tourism development in destination communities.

**Keywords:** Residents' perceptions; Communitarian tourism; Micro-entrepreneurship; Power; Altruism; Guatemala

### Poder, altruismo y turismo comunitario: Un estudio comparativo

**Resumen:** Los residentes de San Juan La Laguna y San Pedro La Laguna, dos pueblos vecinos en la cuenca del Lago de Atitlán (Guatemala), han seguido trayectorias de desarrollo turístico muy diferentes a pesar de su proximidad. En este estudio se explora las percepciones de los residentes de comunidades bajo diferentes modelos económicos y aborda las debilidades de los enfoques teóricos actuales. Se realiza un estudio comparativo de casos etnográfico, a fin de explorar las percepciones de las residentes respecto a las ventajas e inconvenientes derivadas del desarrollo turístico de sus pueblos. Los hallazgos indican que los prevaleciente constructos teóricos no explican plenamente esta dinámica en contextos no occidentales y que son no practican laissez faire capitalismo. Los resultados también sugieren que la fuerte colaboración comunitaria guiada por organizaciones gubernamentales y no gubernamentales puede ayudar a mantener los beneficios del turismo en las comunidades de destino, mientras que previene algunos de sus costos.

**Palabras Clave:** Percepciones de los residentes; turismo comunitario; Micro-empresarial; Poder; Altruismo; Guatemala.

“Porque hay tres clases de turistas... Hay una clase de turistas que son de primera clase llamamos nosotros. Que vienen de compras; que vienen a visitar... Unos de la primera clase compran. Y los de segunda clase vienen de visitas. Y los de tercera clase... los que toman— los hippies dicen. Hay unos que directamente vienen para comprar directamente— solamente para comprar...”

—Fabiana, Female 40 years old, San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala

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## 1. Introduction

Community involvement in planning and ownership of tourism is generally thought to be beneficial to host communities (Haywood, 1988; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Much of the literature has focused on resident perceptions of tourism development, with scholars suggesting that positive feelings toward tourism are essential for the destination's success (Ap, 1992; Sharpley, 2014; Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006). Nevertheless, despite often positive views toward tourism development, residents also recognize drawbacks (Choi & Murray, 2010; Gursoy, Jurowski, Uysal, 2002).

Tourism development has been widely advocated throughout Latin America under the assumption that the region has a comparative advantage in tourism (i.e., the ability to produce a commodity more efficiently and at a smaller opportunity cost; Mowforth, Charlton, & Munt, 2008). Institutions such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) advocate the expansion of tourism in developing countries since it is assumed that environmental and cultural resources are readily available but relatively little investment is necessary by host governments (2002). Tax revenue and foreign currency are promised. Tourism is also promoted to residents of destination areas with the promise that improvements in infrastructure will also benefit them. Such a view of tourism as a development strategy for 'third-world' countries was originally centered on an export-oriented growth strategy to increase international tourist arrivals (Brohman, 1996). It was much aligned with neoliberal economic policies and *laissez faire* capitalism in the West which assumed that economic benefits would "trickle down" from the rich to the poor (Tickner, 1990). Therefore, tourism was "sold" to stakeholders at all levels, from top government officials to local residents. Yet, the real benefit to communities remains unclear and often unrealized.

Research on residents' perceptions of tourism in host communities has often been grounded in theories based on market exchange, such as Social Exchange Theory - SET (Nunkoo, Smith, & Ramkissoon, 2013; Sharpley, 2014). Set proposes that human relationships are based on a subjective cost-benefit analysis and two-sided mutually rewarding social "transactions" (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976). While there is little question that interactions between tourists and hosts can constitute some sort of exchange (as the introductory quote reflects), it is an oversimplification to suggest that individuals simply strive to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of such a relationship. Human relationships are complex and a number of scholars have questioned theories that rely on the assumption of rational choice (Bruce, 1999; Heath, 1976; Sen, 1977). Furthermore, Ariely suggests that the introduction of market based norms to social interactions fundamentally changes the nature of social exchange (2009).

Despite ample scholarship on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, Sharpley (2014) argues that previous research is lacking in three ways: the vast majority of studies focus on developed countries, with the developing world being mostly overlooked; most studies examined domestic tourism, with fewer concentrating on international tourism; and nearly all earlier studies have employed quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research examining the differential impact of alternative (i.e., communitarian) forms of tourism ownership on social exchange. This study fills this gap by using ethnographic mixed-methods case studies of indigenous Guatemalan communities that engage in international tourism. It also expands our understanding of how adjacent tourism destinations utilize varied approaches to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the drawbacks of tourism development under distinct tourism development models.

## 2. Review of the Literature

Research on community perceptions of tourism has been overly skewed toward market-based applications of exchange to explain host-guest social interactions (Chuang, 2010; Kayat, 2002; Moyle, Croy, & Weiler, 2010; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Sharpley, 2014; Ward & Berno, 2011; Weaver & Lawton, 2013; Weiler & Moyle, 2013). The basic premise is that personal relationships are founded on the exchange of favors. Others suggest that the exchanges between people lead to a differentiation of power based on dependence and obligations (Blau, 1964; Baldwin, 1978). More recently scholars have suggested that service exchanges, such as occur in tourism, are embedded in social contexts (Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Gruber, 2009), thus the introduction of monetary exchange undermines existing social norms and erodes long-standing systems of favor exchange (Ariely, 2009).

One of the weaknesses of exchange theories when applied to tourism is that residents are generally assumed to be in a lower power position in the social exchange relationship. While it is well documented

that there is often an imbalance of power (e.g., socially, economically, politically) between tourists and residents; (Berno & Ward, 2005; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010), studies often portray local residents as victims. However, this fails to account for the many ways in which residents have individual agency and are able to take control over, negotiate, and sometimes even manipulate, tourism situations for their own benefit (Wang & Morais, 2014). Cheong and Miller (2000), in their application of Foulcauldian power to tourism, argue that the transient nature of power ensures that the power dynamic between hosts and guests does not necessarily place one over the other. They argue that, "...locals are not always passive when facing economic and social change. Instead of accepting their predicament, locals can be proactive and resistant, as they constantly negotiate and contest the direction of development in the pursuit of their rights and interests" (p. 373). Although it may be true that in the global political economic framework the developed world is in a position of power over the developing world, this dynamic cannot be assumed to play out on a micro level (e.g., tourist-resident) of interaction. Furthermore, distributions of power can be influenced by the overarching economic framework, which deserves exploration.

There is also a social component to the exchange that occurs between tourists and residents (rather than a purely economic exchange), which is rarely examined in the tourism literature. According to Blau (1964), social exchange inspires feelings of personal obligation, gratitude and trust, but such an assumption is rarely applied in tourism. Blau (1964) suggests that power is enacted in terms of supply and demand, with the person seeking services (i.e., the tourist) in a lower power position than a person supplying the services (i.e., the resident). This runs counter to the way power relationships are often portrayed in tourism. The tourist is most often seen as holding the most power. More recent applications of social exchange theories describe a social relationship that is dependent upon principles of economic exchange, specifically a market system model that is capitalistic in nature. While it is conceivable that this may extend to relationships in market-based societies, it is questionable whether it would be applicable under alternative models.

One assumption of social exchange theories is that rational choice is at play, which a number of scholars have questioned (Bruce, 1999; Heath, 1976; Sen, 1977). Sen (1977) doubts the pervasive belief that the underlying principle of economic exchange is self-interest. He argues that economic models treat sources of interpersonal interdependence, including commitment and sympathy, as externalities to (rather than central to) the model. However, these motivations are fundamental to human behavior and cannot be dismissed so easily. Sen argues that individual self-seeking actually produces an inferior economic outcome for every person and that personal gain can be set aside to conform to rules of behavior, or societal norms. Theories of social exchange fail to consider that humans sometimes make choices that do not bring them any immediate or foreseen benefits, or that they can be altruistic. While it has been questioned to what extent economic models might impact altruistic behavior (Takala & Häyry, 2004), little research has been done to explore this phenomenon.

Another shortcoming of social exchange theories, and perhaps most relevant to tourism planning and development, is the inherent leaning towards individualism (Zafirovski, 2005). The approach is two-dimensional nature, focused on the social exchange between two individuals. It fails to address the complex nature of human relationships, which are rarely as simplistic as what one person gains from another. Tourism researchers have assumed that social exchange can also be understood on a community level, but have not addressed how an individualistic theory might play out in the aggregate. Researchers have not considered a communitarian approach to social and economic interactions or explored the implications for these types of interactions in the global south, as opposed from western global north societies, where most of these thinkers originated.

Previous research has been primarily linear and focused on how tourist/visitor exchanges lead to residents' perceptions and an expression of support or rejection of tourism (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Ap, 1992; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). These studies have relied primarily on self-reported questionnaires and do not capture the complicated relationships that exist between tourists and residents. Consequently, this study takes an ethnographic approach to better understand the complex behaviors that contribute to tourist-local interactions. It moves beyond the existing application of theories of social exchange and explores the way residents negotiate their relationships with tourists and tourism, especially under varying economic development models. This study adds another dimension to our understanding of tourist-resident social interactions, particularly in regards to continued community support of tourism, even when there is little in the way of positive social exchange gain.

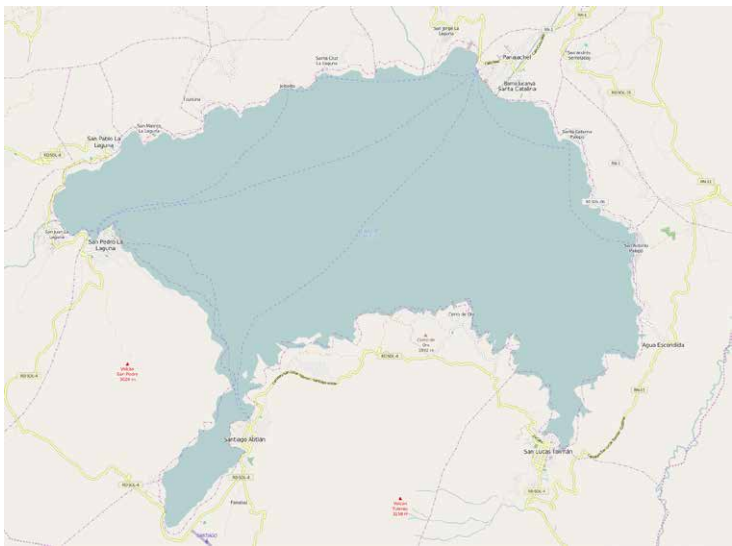
3. Research Setting

This study was carried out in two neighboring communities on the shores of Lake Atitlán, Guatemala. San Juan La Laguna (San Juan) and San Pedro La Laguna (San Pedro) are located approximately one kilometer apart on the western shore of the ancient volcanic lake in the Western Highlands of Guatemala (Figures 1 and 2). Guatemala has long been a tourist destination, with foreign tourists arriving since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sincal Lopez, 2007). The region of Lake Atitlán is the second most popular tourism destination in Guatemala. Each town is easily accessible by *lancha* (small boats) from Panajachel, the tourist center and transportation hub of the lake. The Maya culture is an important aspect of the touristic appeal of the area, with many communities being largely indigenous. San Juan and San Pedro are primarily inhabited by Mayans who speak the T'zutujil dialect. The communities have generally

Figure: 1 Map of Guatemala



Figure 2: Map of study setting: San Juan de la Laguna and San Pedro de la Laguna



retained outward expressions of the Tzutujil culture, including language and dress, but do so to varying degrees. For example, 96% of the population of San Juan speaks an indigenous dialect whereas this is only 78% in San Pedro. Traditional dress (*traje*) is still worn by many women in both communities, but is becoming less popular among men (Facultad de las Ciencias, 2008).

The two communities share cultural and linguistic similarities but they differ substantially in regards to tourism. In San Pedro, tourism evolved largely in response to externally controlled tourism demand and with the unregulated involvement of non-local business owners. It is based primarily on a free-market model (characterized by *laissez-faire* policies by the municipality). The vast majority of tourism offerings in San Pedro are individually owned (either by residents of San Pedro or foreigners). San Pedro has a long history of entrepreneurship, with residents originally becoming successful through coffee and transportation (Tally & Chavajay, 2007). While there are a few organized tourism groups (e.g., *lancha* drivers, tour guides) in San Pedro, the model is not pervasive, and the economic exchange is characterized by aggressive selling tactics and haggling for prices. San Pedro also has a much more established tourism infrastructure than San Juan. When global coffee prices fell in 2000 and 2001, *Pedranos* (residents of San Pedro) invested heavily in tourism (Tally & Chavajay, 2007). Generally, tourists visiting San Pedro are young American and European backpackers from middle class backgrounds who engage in drug use and hedonistic behaviors. Despite the significant presence of tourism in the community, the primary industries remain agriculture, manufacturing, textiles and food services (Tally & Chavajay, 2007).

In contrast, tourism in San Juan has developed within the past decade (Lyon, 2013) and in a very structured manner. It has developed with the intervention of development-based NGOs who mobilized community engagement and supported business cooperatives in an effort to capture a larger portion of tourism revenue. San Juan employs a general model of communitarian tourism and is primarily characterized by cooperatively managed artisanal shops and galleries. Though NGOs have operated within this model, cooperative structures and a communitarian philosophy pre-date their interventions. Communitarian economics refers to a centrist position on the economic spectrum between totalitarianism and libertarianism (Garfinkle, 1997) and is characterized by an emphasis on the achievement of a common purpose for a community with a shared history and cultural identity. Most cooperatives are run by *Juaneros* (residents of San Juan), though they may be organized by national or international NGOs. The community is home to communal art galleries, a communitarian tour guide operation, coffee cooperatives, and more than 30 weaving cooperatives. Homestays with local families are also popular. There are a handful of hotels and restaurants in San Juan, but these are much fewer than in San Pedro. *Juaneros* are able to set what they perceive as fair prices and are not vulnerable to excessive bargaining. Visitors to San Juan experience virtually no pressure to buy in the cooperatives or other retail locations in town.

#### 4. Methods and Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to better understand how residents negotiate the complex benefits and drawbacks that stem from tourism under two models of economic exchange. It compares communitarian tourism versus a *laissez faire* approach to tourism expansion and growth. This study utilized an ethnographic approach to data collection. The primary author conducted seven-weeks of fieldwork in the region, between May and July 2013, living with a local host family. An initial period was spent interacting informally with community members as well as frequenting tourism businesses and touristic locations. Perspectives from both communities were captured through field notes. This time was also used to form connections with key informants to be recruited for follow-up interviews.

Informants were invariably individuals who participated actively in the tourism economy, as they were most often found in and around areas of tourism exchange. All study participants spoke Spanish to some extent, as this is the *lingua franca* of tourism commerce in the region. Although some residents do not speak Spanish, all those encountered working in the tourism industry were competent in spoken Spanish. While it is conceivable that monolingual Tz'utujil residents may have differing perceptions of tourism, many still benefit from tourism. Even if they don't interact directly with tourists, they may do so indirectly by selling goods to others who join in the tourism market exchange, are part of cooperatives where bilingual members engage in commercial transactions, or otherwise work in roles that do not require knowledge of the Spanish language. However, as we are interested in the *exchange* between tourists and locals, little would be added to the study by interviewing those who do not come in contact with visitors (Sharpley, 2014).

Several methods were triangulated for comprehensive data collection. Direct observation and participant observation were used to gain tacit knowledge of cultural behavior (Dewalt, Dewalt, & Wayland, 1998).

Thirty in-depth, semi-structured interviews were completed that ranged between 15 minutes to one hour in length; 16 interviews were completed in San Juan (9 women; 7 men) and 14 in San Pedro (6 women; 8 men). Twenty-seven interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the informants; the three interviews of community leaders were documented through extensive note-taking since they declined audio recording. Interviews took place in a location comfortable for the informant (e.g., their home or tourism business location) at a time of their choosing. Interviews were designed to cover broad topics related to the informants' views regarding their work in tourism, the economic development of their community, the efficacy of the municipal political system, and the perceived differences between tourism in the two communities. The interview protocol was pre-tested among a few initial participants and revised to reflect local language usage.

Free listing exercises were also conducted with a total of 60 participants (30 per town) regarding perception of tourists and tourism in their community. In free listing open-ended questions are used to obtain a list or partial set of items from each informant, with the goal being to get a comprehensive sample of items with unknown boundaries (Weller, 1998). Participants were asked to list the pros and cons (*cosas buenas y cosas malas*) of tourism in their community. A benefit of free listing exercises is that the researcher is not imposing pre-determined categories on the informants. The authors worked closely with local informants and bi-lingual Mayan-Spanish speakers to develop and adapt research instruments to the local context. Furthermore, the researcher provided participants with the option to have the questionnaire read aloud to address issues with Spanish literacy. The focus of this paper relies primarily on data from the free listing exercise and is supplemented with data from the in-depth interviews as well as observations from field notes. All informants have been provided with a pseudonym to protect their identity.

This study addresses some of the methodological shortcomings of prior research on residents' perceptions. In a thorough review of previous research, Sharpley (2014) argues that resident's perceptions and attitudes are likely to be influenced by the difference in social and cultural norms among international tourists, which has not been routinely studied. He also suggests that there is a dearth of qualitative studies on this topic and longitudinal approaches as many studies take place at one moment in time. While this study is not longitudinal, the researcher did spend seven weeks in an international context and was therefore able to observe social processes ethnographically rather than take only a snapshot of residents' perceptions.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were analyzed using an inductive Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) and began in the field. Qualitative field notes as well as transcriptions and summaries of interviews were first open coded, followed by axial and theoretical coding as suggested by Charmaz (2006) and Henderson (2006). The codes were subsequently compared between three authors to increase trustworthiness. Free-listing data were coded into categories and then grouped into broad dimensions, which were then analyzed quantitatively using frequency counts (Weller, 1998; Weller 2007). While qualitative methods were dominant, quantitative methods were embedded to provide more detail in some areas (Creswell, 2011).

Two of the researchers worked together closely to negotiate the codes and ensure consensus and increase trustworthiness (Henderson, 2006), with the other authors providing insight and validation based on both emic and etic knowledge of the region (Olive, 2014). Quotes, phrases and interview excerpts are presented verbatim in Spanish. The exact language of the participants was retained wherever possible to give the reader a sense of the participant's voice. This means that quotes may contain grammatical or syntax errors, as Spanish is the second language (after Tz'utujil) for most participants.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Perceived benefits of tourism

A total of 215 free listing items related to positive outcomes (109 in San Juan and 106 in San Pedro) were recorded. Individual items listed by *Juaneros* were coded into 25 topics; while those listed by *Pedranos* were coded into 23 topics. These topics were subsequently grouped into the five dimensions: Economic, Sociological, Environmental and Cultural and Community Well-being. In both communities, Economic benefits were listed most often (36.7% in San Juan and 40.6% in San Pedro; Figure 3). Generally, *Juaneros* conveyed broad community gains from tourism (e.g., *beneficios a la comunidad*; Figure 4), whereas individual benefits were salient among *Pedranos* (e.g., *trabajo*; Figure 5). These themes also emerged rather frequently in the semi-structured interviews, particularly in regards to jobs, income, and economic development.

Figure 3: Good things about tourism in San Juan and San Pedro

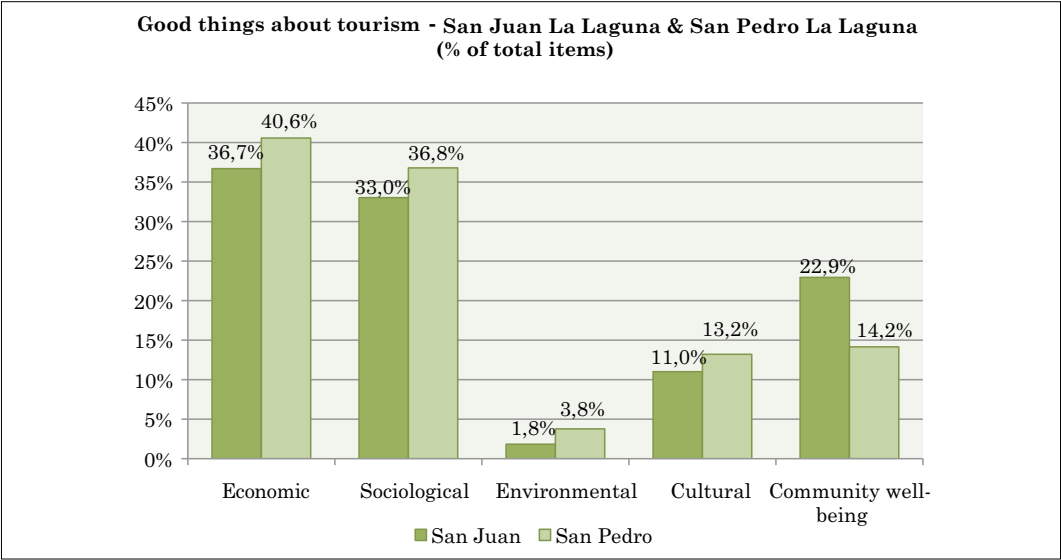


Figure 4: Cosas buenas sobre el turismo en San Juan



Sociological benefits (e.g., learning new ideas and languages, friendly exchanges with tourists, good examples set by tourists) were also mentioned frequently (33.0% in San Juan; 36.8% in San Pedro). Residents of both communities mentioned benefits from tourism related to Community Well-being (e.g., community development, support for community projects, help for the vulnerable), but these themes were more prevalent in San Juan (22.9%) than San Pedro (14.2%). Positive cultural influences (e.g., support of traditional handicrafts, heritage conservation, cultural exchange) were observed by residents in San Juan (11.0%) and San Pedro (13.2%), but fewer expressed an improvement in environmental benefits from tourism (1.8% in San Juan; 3.8% in San Pedro).



Figure 5: Cosas buenas sobre el turismo en San Pedro



5.1.1 Economic benefits

Despite similarities in benefits expressed by residents of both towns, some differences did emerge in terms of economic benefits. *Pedranos* listed items related to economic development (16.0%), jobs (15.1%) and income (6.6%) most often, specifically referring to “*más voluntad de trabajar*”, “*oportunidad de trabajo*”, and “*generan trabajos*”. *Calista*, a 24-year-old female worker at a tourism shop explains, “*a través del turismo uno puede ganar mucho dinero*”. Related to work, but in a broader sense, *Pedranos* recognized that tourism was good for the economy of their town; they explained that, “*en lo económico sí nos beneficia*”, “*beneficio económico*”, “*apoya recursos económicos*”, and “*fortalece la economía*”.

*Juaneros* also recognized the overall economic benefits of tourism, but, in contrast, they were more likely to mention how tourism affected the broader community, including specifically how tourism can help a number of families or the town, rather than just themselves individually. They listed good things about tourism as related to economic development (12.8%), income (11.0%), and jobs (10.1%) most often. In terms of economic development, they listed, “*mejoramiento en la economía*”, “*recurso económico*”, and “*los ingresos mejoran la economía de las familias*”. *Godofredo*, a 21-year-old male artist explains how tourism in *San Juan* is being developed to bring benefits directly to families,

*Aunque también la mayoría quiere quedarse en San Juan, pero como te decía no hay hoteles. Pero hay otra forma que tiene San Juan, en turismo... se le llama como Posadas Mayas. Entonces conviven, comen, se quedan durmiendo cada día con una familia... Esto es mejor porque el desarrollo o el ingreso se queda directamente en cada familia, no sólo una persona cuando tenga un gran hotel. Esa es la diferencia—si vienen personas de quince, veinte personas es porque vienen a beneficiar esta cantidad de familias. El desarrollo sirve para el pueblo en general.*

His explanation includes a subtle comparison to *San Pedro*. Since *San Juan* does not have hotels (like *San Pedro* does), visitors must stay with a family and the benefits are retained at the household level, rather than benefiting a business owner who may or may not reside in the community. Further, as more visitors stay overnight in *San Juan* more families benefit.

To further elaborate on this shared sense of benefit in *San Juan*, *Fabiana*, a 40-year-old female artisan in the town explains that while tourism may not benefit her directly, it is still a boost for her neighbors, and is therefore supportive of tourism activities,

*Porque el turismo...por ejemplo, si no vienen a comprar cuadros con nosotros, pero pueden comprar cuadros de otros compañeros o pueden comprar otras bolsas o pueden comprar tejidos o una gaseosa o una agua pura o al menos vienen a beneficiar los que están aquí. Porque el turismo, si no lleva cosas así, cosas como artesanía—que no es eso—pero vino a comprar su agua pura o su fruta, es al menos allí. Dejan un poquito.*

While *Juaneros* and *Pedranos* both recognize that tourism brings economic development to their communities, the discourse they use varies. In San Pedro, tourism workers tend to be more concerned with their personal income and wages, while *Juaneros* more often speak of a broader community benefit. Furthermore, *Juaneros* pointed to the individualism present in San Pedro as one of the explanations for the problems they experience. In a conversation with a communitarian tour guide in San Juan, he suggested that the long history of community organization in San Juan was responsible for positive tourism development and suggests that this is lacking in San Pedro. He explains that despite the presence of some community organizations in San Pedro, most prefer to work alone in tourism (Fieldnotes, May 30, 2013).

### 5.1.2 Sociological benefits

Many of the sociological benefits that stem from tourism were mentioned by participants in both communities. *Pedranos* believed that sociological benefits from tourism include friendly exchange with tourists (9.4%), a good example set by the tourists (7.6%), learning opportunities either in form of new ideas (5.7%) or foreign languages (4.7%), as well as supporting education in their community (3.8%). *Juaneros* similarly listed friendly exchange with tourists (11.9%), a good example set by the tourists (5.5%), and the opportunity to learn new ideas (4.6%). In terms of friendly exchange, *Pedranos* listed “*amables*” and “*buenas amistades*”; similarly, *Juaneros* listed “*llegan buenos comportamientos de otros amigos*”, “*sembrar amistades*”, and “*a divertirse con la gente*”.

Additionally, residents in both communities felt that sometimes tourists set a good example for the residents. *Pedranos* explained this as “*buenas prácticas*”, “*son muy educados*” and “*respetuosos*”. Similarly, *Juaneros* listed “*responsables*”, “*la puntualidad*”, “*educados*”. Residents also felt they were able to learn new ideas from the tourists. *Pedranos* explain, “*aprendemos cosas nuevas*”, “*ideas positivas*” and “*nuevas ideas para los negocios*”. Ernesto mentions, “*aprendí a trabajar en artesanía por medio de la gente que se llaman jipis*.” He explains that 35 or 40 years ago, the hippies began to visit San Pedro and that, “*por contacto, empezamos a ver cómo trabajaban y todo eso y allí es como uno empieza a aprender a tener algunos ideas de cómo ser artesanías*”.

To this *Juaneros* added, “*nos enseñan cosas buenas*”, el “*intercambio de ideas*” and “*recomendaciones*”. *Juaneros*, in particular, have benefitted from foreigners coming to support local non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specifically in support of the many weaving cooperatives in town. Most residents do not distinguish between the tourists that come to help and those that come to vacation. Joaquina, a 18-year-old barista at a café explains, “*Los turistas están apoyando—en este caso ellos tal vez vienen a visitar de sus país porque San Juan necesita apoyo. Los grupos están creciendo más, como las organizaciones de tejidos*”. And later she elaborates, “*Está bien que ellos vengan de visita. Pero así como grupo que vino, vino hacer algo bueno para el pueblo*”.

Residents of both communities discussed the opportunity to learn new languages (Spanish, but also English, French and even Israeli) as a result of tourism, though this was listed more frequently among *Pedranos*. Participants listed “*aprender otros idiomas*”, “*a través de ellos se aprende otros idiomas*”, “*intercambio de idioma*”. One *Juanero* also explains that they now had the opportunity to “*hablar más español*”. Since the first language of nearly all residents is Tz’utujil, interactions with tourists also give them the occasion to practice their second language, Spanish.

Additionally, *Pedranos* listed support of education as a benefit. Most listed simply “*educación*” or “*apoya la educación*”. There are several projects in San Pedro that use tourist dollars to support the education of residents. One informant explains how she was able to attend school on a scholarship paid for by tourists,

*Los turistas que llegan aquí apoyan a las familias que no pueden dar a sus hijos en las escuelas. Y dan becas a los hijos para beneficio. Porque hay padres de familia que, como te digo, que no tienen trabajo y los niños se queden en la casa—no pueden estudiar. En cambio, los turistas que llegaron aquí, los benefician a los niños en que pueden desenvolverse. También, es una ayuda, una beca también...Sí, yo he estudiado. Me gradué de una administración. Y también, yo recibí una beca gracias a los turistas.*

The social interactions between tourists and residents were listed nearly as frequently as benefits of economic development during the free-listing exercise.

### 5.1.3 Community Well-being benefits

Informants in both communities expressed how tourism contributed to the improvement of their community; however this theme was most salient among *Juaneros*. They often talked about how tourism brings benefits within the context of their community, rather than only for individual profit.

Community benefits derived from tourism include, “*beneficia a toda la comunidad*”, “*fortalecimiento comunitario*”, and “*crean proyectos para el beneficio de la comunidad*”, Agustín, a young painter, explains,

*A veces también el turismo trae beneficios a la comunidad. Como, vienen grupos—vienen por grupos. Digamos que vienen dos grupos acá, dos grupos en San Pablo, en Santa Clara, San Marcos, en San Pedro y en Santiago. Construyen casas. Sí, yo he visto muchos. Construyen casas, trae—no sé—beneficios de la comunidad. Buscan las personas más pobres. Más pobres, sí—gente que ya no tienen casas. Bueno, gente que no tienen muchos recursos y llegan a ayudarlos.*

While not all residents benefit directly from tourism, there is a general sense that it is good for the community and is therefore supported.

#### 5.1.4 Cultural benefits

Culture is an important aspect of the daily lives of the residents of these two communities. Mayas in Guatemala (as elsewhere) have historically suffered from discrimination and exclusion from the political process (Rasch, 2011). Yet, in Guatemala, they have retained many outward markers of their culture, remarkably language and *traje*. The Tz’utujil communities of San Juan and San Pedro speak often of their culture, understood in two senses: as a learning or exchange of cultures, and as a representation of the Tz’utujil Maya culture. *Pedranos* listed things such as, “*compartir cultura*”, “*conocer otras culturas*”, “*la relación de compartir cultura*”, “*realizar más actividades culturales*”, “*dar a conocer más nuestra cultura*”, and “*conocer su país a través de ellos*”. Similarly, *Juaneros* listed, “*intercambio de culturas*”, and “*protección de la cultura*” as benefits of tourism. One participant in San Juan suggests, “*Porque si practicas la cultura, los turistas les gustan eso, llama atención al turismo. Y tal vez por eso que San Juan está viniendo mucho turismo porque todavía mantienen una tradición.*” He understands that the Maya culture is a primary draw for tourists and that at the same time, it helps maintain these practices. Other informants suggested that the growth of tourism in San Juan was directly related to the preservation of cultural practices, something they viewed as deteriorating in San Pedro.

#### 5.1.5 Environmental benefits

While the residents of San Juan and San Pedro are highly dependent on the natural environment for their livelihoods, both through tourism and coffee cultivation, this theme was not prominent in their responses. *Juaneros* did, however, list “*conservación del patrimonio natural*”, and “*ecológico*” as benefits from tourism. *Pedranos* added that tourists bring “*ideas sobre basura y limpiar*”. One of the contradictions is that while tourists might bring ideas regarding cleaning and trash disposal, they also produce trash waste that needs to be disposed of. One *Juanero* explained,

*Sí, pero el problema ahora es sacaron las botes en la calle. Ahora, no hay botes en la calle. El problema que hizo la gente—con otro alcalde, subiera a pagar la basura. Un quetzal por [trash collection]... La gente no quería pagar. Lo que hacen es—la bolsa están en la bote, entonces seguirá la bolsa... La gente tiene que pagar su basura. El problema ahora, si las turistas quieren, no hay bote para tirar su basura. No hay donde. No hay botes. Esto es el problema pensamos ahora.*

This individual describes one of the many environmental challenges with large-scale tourism development (i.e., waste disposal), and highlights how tensions can arise between residents and the local government. In this case, the influx of tourists is a strain on already strapped municipal infrastructure.

### 6. Perceived costs of tourism.

Despite the many benefits participants listed, they did identify a number of challenges related to tourism (Figure 6). Participants listed a total of 94 items related to negative outcomes derived from tourism development (34 in San Juan, 60 in San Pedro). Individual items listed by *Juaneros* were coded into 14 topics; *Pedranos* listed drawbacks that were coded into 13 topics. The items also fell into the same five dimensions as the positive outcomes (Economic, Sociological, Environmental,

Cultural and Community Well-being). Overall, costs of tourism were seen to be largely related to sociological interactions (e.g., the setting of a bad example by tourists, the consumption of alcohol and drugs, smoking of cigarettes, and creating a bad reputation for the town). While drug use was a major theme for both towns (Figures 7 and 8), it was particularly salient in San Pedro (Figure 8). Nearly three quarters (73.3%) of the items listed by *Pedranos* fell under this category in contrast to 52.9% among *Juaneros*.

Figure 6: Bad things about tourism in San Juan and San Pedro

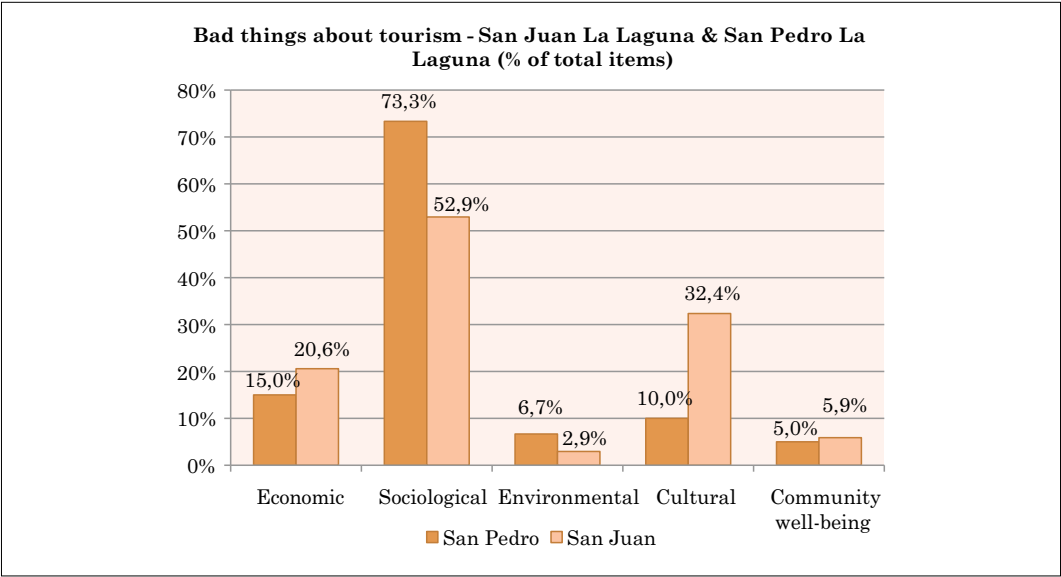


Figure 7: Cosas malas sobre el turismo en San Juan





*vida de los extranjeros*”, “*culturización de otros países*”, and “*algunos no respetan los que viven aquí*”. Participants in San Pedro added, “*hacer perder más nuestra cultura*” and “*no respetar*”. There are hedonistic (i.e., “Full Moon” and “Rave”) parties that take place in San Pedro regularly, which are seen as disrupting local mores. Yet, these are tolerated to a certain extent. In San Juan, however, this type of cultural tension is not tolerated. Recently a group that had taken up residence in San Juan was banished, as their values did not coincide with local values and customs.

### 6.3 Economic problems

While participants did recognize a number of economic benefits derived from tourism, they also identified economic problems (e.g., stealing business from locals, tourists not spending money). This was an issue in both communities, but was mentioned slightly more often in San Juan (20.0%) than San Pedro (15.0%). *Juaneros* listed issues such as “*regatear precios*”, “*llevar nuestras ideas a su país para que ellos lo hagan una industria en su país*”, and “*no promoción*”. *Pedranos* were very concerned with competition with foreigners, which is related to the number of foreigners owning businesses in the touristic zone; they listed for example “*se apoderan de lugares y privatización*”, “*la comunidad pierde el espacio de trabajo*”, “*ellos hacen su propio negocio*”, and “*no compran*”.

Despite the concern in both towns about tourists’ pressure to lower prices through bargaining, this practice takes place much more often in San Pedro than in San Juan. In nearly all weaving cooperatives in San Juan, the women individually set the prices they want to earn from their weavings. The representative working in the store has no authority to lower the price, ultimately eliminating the possibility for bartering. This affords the weavers in San Juan more power in the price negotiation. While they struggle with consistency in quality and selection, by organizing themselves in the cooperatives, the women are able to negotiate these challenges and meet the overall demand of the tourism consumers.

Mentioned less often, but still noteworthy, were issues related to community well-being, namely violence and illnesses. The rate of occurrence was very similar among both communities (5.0% in San Pedro; 5.7% in San Juan). Residents of both towns spoke of violence that originated in bars and was fueled by alcohol, but this was mentioned more often in San Pedro. The violence mentioned was sometimes exclusively between residents and other times involved tourists.

## 7. Discussion

Findings suggest that despite challenges, residents of both San Juan and San Pedro are overall supportive of tourism in their communities. However, unlike previous applications of social exchange theories to tourism, our findings indicate that there is not a clear one-to-one exchange of favors and benefits between tourists and residents. The findings also suggest that residents in both communities view economic benefits distinctly from social benefits and weigh them differently. Further, an increase in perceived benefits did not lead to a greater expression of support for tourism, nor did an increase in perceived costs lead to a less support for tourism in either community. Instead, these issues were complicated by the type of tourism development in each community.

Our findings indicate that tourism residents under a communitarian model (San Juan) are more likely to focus on broad community benefits and do not choose to base their opinion of tourism on the benefits they receive individually. These *altruistic* tendencies run counter to assumptions of prevailing models of social exchange, which assume that residents are individual rational actors who maximize their own benefit. This is consistent with previous theorists, who suggest that utilitarianism is more present in liberal economies (Hoewel, 2013; Weinstein 1996) and altruism is more present in communitarian communities (Bell, 2005; Peacock, 1999). These tendencies not only influence resident’s perception of tourism (Figure 9), but also shape the way tourism is conceptualized within the community.

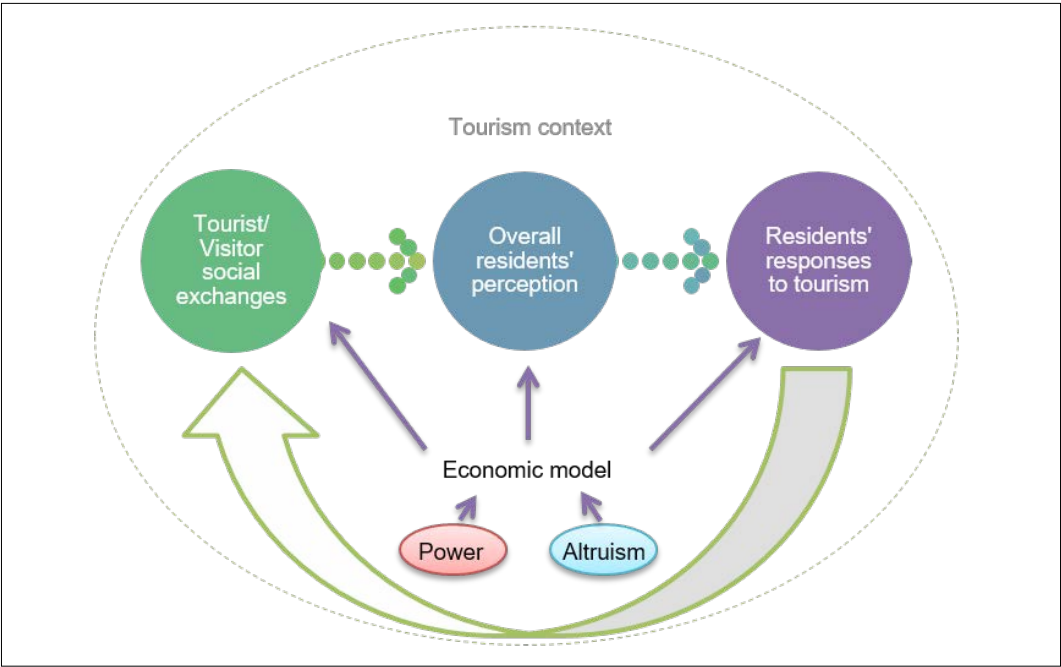
Results also indicate that *power* is enacted differently in San Juan and San Pedro and is not as two-dimensional as initially assumed. While destination communities sometimes suffer from dependence on tourism, we found that power is exercised differently by the individual than it is by the collective in regards to shaping tourism development. Our findings did not support the claim that increased individual resident power necessarily led to increased support of tourism, but instead that *collective power* could help shield against some of the drawbacks of tourism. *Juaneros* expressed fewer economic drawbacks to tourism in their community than in San Pedro, indicating that they are able to insulate themselves from the challenges of neoliberal development to some extent. San Pedro has also experienced a number of social ills, most notably an increase in illegal drug use, which has not plagued San Juan. Despite



a greater number of problems related to tourism in San Pedro, residents still remain supportive of tourism as an economic driver. They do not have the power, however, to shape tourism to their liking.

While some advocates of social exchange theory suggests that residents will withdraw support for tourism when the costs become too great (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), our results do not support this claim. Residents in San Pedro listed fewer benefits and a great deal more drawbacks to tourism than those in San Juan, but were not less supportive of tourism development overall in their community. As Sharpley (2014) has suggested, withdrawal of support for tourism by host communities is rare. Even though they might perceive fewer benefits to themselves and their families, it seems dubious whether they would reject tourism as a means of economic development. Fanon (1991) argues that intact repressive social structures work on the psychology of the oppressed and that wealth and success are tied up with issues of ethnicity. He argues that even when so-called opportunities present themselves to the formerly colonized, they (1) may not recognize them as such and (2) may not believe themselves capable of rising above their subservient status. Further research is needed to unpack the reasons behind this paradox and to explain why some communities continue to support tourism, particularly in the face of increasing negative impacts of tourism.

Figure 9: Power, altruism and social exchange



8. Implications for future research

This study has explored the role of altruism and cooperative power under communitarian tourism. It has also questioned whether theories of social exchange provide a complete picture in the understanding tourist-resident interactions. Theoretical frameworks that apply free market principles to social interactions are not appropriate in all cultural contexts, particularly those communities that do not subscribe to *laissez faire* or liberal economic approaches to tourism development. It also questions why communities continue to support tourism despite serious challenges. Further research is needed to better understand this contradiction.

While community participation in tourism has been widely advocated, namely through community-based tourism and ecotourism models, communitarian tourism planning goes beyond a simple framework.

It is an economic philosophy adopted by the community prior to implementing tourism development. Communitarianism is relevant to a variety of industries, but hold special promise for tourism. More research is needed to better understand endogenous (e.g., motivations) and exogenous (e.g., external economic influx) factors behind adopting a communitarian model as well as methods to ensure the success of communitarian tourism among diverse communities; this is particularly needed in non-western countries and among destinations at varying stages of their tourism life cycle. Attention should also be paid to the types of tourists that visit a location since they may also influence the tourism product, given that consumption patterns vary by type of tourist (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010).

## 9. Conclusion

This study clearly shows that rational choice (expressed as pure self-interest) is not at play in all tourism destinations, as observed in San Juan. Further, results suggest that the mere presence of an entrepreneurial spirit and resulting economic benefits are not enough to guard against the negative aspects of tourism, as is the case in San Pedro. Rather, strong community cooperation, either organically acquired or aided by the assistance of a committed organization (non-profit, NGO, governmental, private) appears to be necessary to shape tourism for the true benefit of residents. While it remains suspect that host communities will withdraw support for tourism, even with significant challenges, collective power is effective in shielding residents against some troubles introduced by tourism. Prevailing theories of resident-tourist interactions are based on the assumption that the group is simply made up of individual rational actors. Study findings suggest, however, that the individual actions cannot be separated from their social structure.

In sum, this study indicates that collective power and altruism are enhanced under alternative models of tourism, specifically communitarian tourism. This would suggest that a cooperative model, whether developed organically or with outside intervention, can help insulate a community from the negative effects of social exchange that are introduced by tourism. This offers many opportunities for future research on the influence of varying economic models on tourism-dependent communities, particularly the role of different models of entrepreneurship in harnessing the potential of tourism to improve the well-being of host communities.

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