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The impact of tourism on the physical environment

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Abstract

Cohen Erik “The Impact of Tourism on the Physical Environment”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. V, No. 2, April/June 1978, pp. 215–237. While moderate and well-distributed tourism may help to upkeep attractions and preserve the environment, tourism as a mass industry poses new environmental risks. This paper is a first attempt to assess systematically the environmental impact of tourism and to spell out the principal factors on which this impact depends: the intensity of tourist site-use, the resiliency of the eco-system, the time perspective of the developers and the transformational character of touristic developments. The environmental dynamics of the tourist ecological sub-system are shown to consist of a constant expansion at the margins and intensification at the mature core, leading to the creation of “contrived” attractions both at the core (as “natural” attractions decline) and the margins (to supplement meager “natural” attractions as tourism expands into less attractive regions). Two major types of measures for environmental protection are

discussed: those protecting the environment *for* tourism and those protecting it *from* tourism. The need for the second type of measures is emphasized, particularly in developing countries, which face greater environmental risks from tourism than the developed ones.



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Keywords

environment; developing areas; tourism planning

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— Erik Cohen is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has done sociological and anthropological research in Israel (kibbutzim, new towns, ethnic groups). Peru (Urban anthropology), The Pacific Islands (tourism) and Thailand (tourism in hill tribe region). His present research interests are tourism, expatriates, strangers and social ecology.

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