



## **Cosmopolitan Tourism and Host-Guest exchanges in the Nakanai Range, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea**

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**Abstract:** MacLeod's (2013) notion of 'cultural realignment' relates directly to the power of the tourism industry to affect the transformation of the lived environment. This paper posits that the ideal visitation involves the transformation of the visitor experience to conform to the cultural landscape and the social dynamics of place. Extending Robbin's (2015) biological notion of resilient island environments as sites of cosmopolitan engagement to the "sacred geographies of island Melanesia" (Bainton, Ballard and Gillespie 2012), I argue that multicultural dimensions of island livelihoods in Papua New Guinea that link trading partners and social relations, such as men's houses, walking tracks, gardens and spirit tracks, provide social infrastructure for managing the opportunities and impositions of tourist encounters.

Drawing upon anthropological fieldwork experiences with a colleague in a remote village in the Nakanai Mountain Range of New Britain Island, I situate the idea of cosmopolitan tourism within a mutual concern for the other in the spatial politics of the village. Such cosmopolitan tourisms are not simply products of state or market-based imperatives but outcomes of intercultural negotiations between visitors and host communities, involving the reconciliation of the goals of visitor with those of the local people. In these spatiotemporal encounters, cosmopolitan tourism can generate reciprocal interdependence and obligation - relationships that are both material and semiotic. It is in this regard that suppressing the distinction between kin and visitor is of central import in defining cosmopolitan tourism in the village context. Papua New Guineans have long negotiated multiple types of social relations within networks of hospitality that have included local visitors, and more distinctly, colonial visitors such as missionaries, patrol officers and researchers. Cosmopolitan hospitality, based upon a mutual ethics of care and concern can help define more equitable forms of tourism in New Britain's ongoing integration into a global tourist economy.

**Keywords:** Cultural landscapes, Cosmopolitan Tourism, Guest-Host Exchanges, New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea

## Introduction

Anthropologists and tourists seem to have a lot in common. Both spend time exploring the cultural productions and rituals of society, and both carry the status of outsider as they make forays into the lives of others. (Stronza 2001, p.61)

French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss (1955) described the experience of travelling as filled with “trivial circumstances and insignificant happenings”. Declaring in *Triste Tropiques* “I hate traveling and explorers”, Levi-Strauss was fascinated by the exotic and became a reluctant traveler. In his dystopian prediction, Levi-Strauss anticipated that the rapid growth of the mass tourism market which would accompany travel to far off places, would create “monocultures” of tourism and a global industry of travel-book illusions:

I understand how it is that people delight in travel-books and ask only to be misled by them. Such books preserve the illusion of some thing that no longer exists, but yet must be assumed to exist if we are to escape from the appalling indictment that has been piling up against us through twenty thousand years of history. There's nothing to be done about it: civilization is no longer a fragile flower, to be carefully preserved and reared with great difficulty here and there in sheltered corners of a territory rich in natural resources.... All that is over: humanity has taken to monoculture, once and for all, and is preparing to produce civilization in bulk, as if it were sugar-beet. The same dish will be served to us every day (ibid., p.39).

For Levi-Strauss, travel was tiring and arduous, but the social reinvention that accompanied the ‘slow travel’ of ship transport provided a new lens to view and understand the world:

Not only does a journey transport us over enormous distances, it also causes us to move a few degrees up or down in the social scale. It displaces us physically and also — for better or for worse — takes us out of our class context, so that the color and flavor of certain places cannot be dissociated from the always unexpected

social level on which we find ourselves in experiencing them (ibid., p.86).

Reflecting on his experiences of international travel, Levi-Strauss provided a window into the, what was then largely uncharted, waters of tourism. In the 1960s, the growing affluence of the middle classes in Western industrial nations, encouraged by jumbo jets and charter tours, saw tourism expand on a grand scale (de Kadt 1984, p.ix). In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the tsunami of tourism travel has become an “unbounded’ phenomenon where people, capital and information defy geographic barriers by crossing borders” with a minimum of physical effort (Chang 2016, p.100). Such tourism mobilities often involve frictions, challenges and negative consequences for tourism development (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the massive power of mass tourism in shaping destinations, it is the types of intercultural encounters that are of most significance in terms of the impacts of outsiders on the host society (Nettekoven 1984, p.135). Whether the tourist’s endgame is a quest for learning or an escape (or both), the impacts of tourism are complex and multifaceted. Tourism can provide a demand for cultural experiences that encourages the use and transfer of traditional skills and knowledge within local communities (King 2016). More often, and sometimes unwittingly, tourism contributes to physical transformations and cultural commodification, constituting critical forms of ‘cultural realignment’ that may impact upon all levels of society from the nation-state, to villages and their inhabitants (Macleod 2013, p.75). Aware of the power asymmetries represented by their apparent links to Western material wealth, anthropologists and researchers, studying and collecting knowledge in local contexts, are committed to an explicit ethics of care, equity and relational negotiation. The potentiality for improved livelihoods through tourism as a mode of development needs to be set against the knowledge that growth alone may not suffice to overcome poverty within a reasonable time, and may even exasperate inequality through the transformation of sociocultural structures.

This paper contributes to the literature on cultural tourism by placing a focus on ‘time’ as a resource in ethical models of visitation involving host-guest relationships. Through the method of participant observation, I describe a brief two-week research experience which involved data collection on taro

cultivation in Bago Village, which is located so close to the border between New Britain's only two provinces that residents can, so it is said, vote in both these electorates. Bago is a day's travel from both provincial capitals - Kimbe (in West New Britain Province) and Kokopo (in East New Britain).

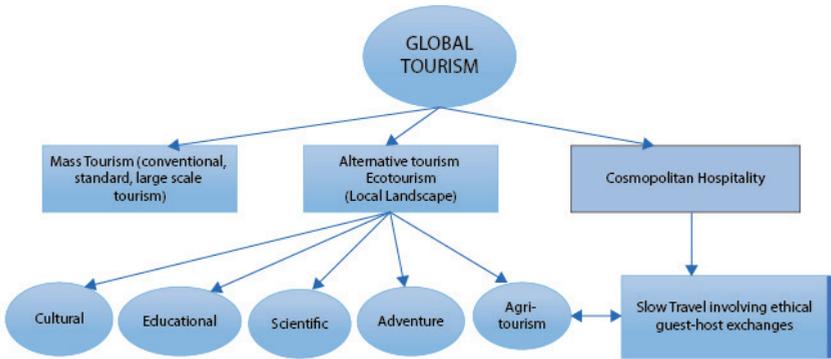
Drawing upon my brief fieldwork experiences which are vastly different from mass tourism engagements in the island's capitals, I discuss how modes of host-guest engagements can be experienced, embodied, situated, and performed in ways that may "give us hope for the progressive potential of tourism to transform differences into equity" (Swain 2009, p.505). I am not suggesting that the complete transformation of the tourist experience to the local culture is neither possible nor desirable, but the relationships developed from ethnographic fieldwork point to the potential cosmopolitan tourism has for countering the profound impacts of tourism on cultures and the environment (UNESCO 2008).

While "the normal tourist is not to be compared with an anthropologist or other researcher" (Nettekoven 1984, p.136-137), it is important to note that unless intercultural engagements benefit host communities in ways that are not simply directed toward satiating the pleasure-seeking desires of tourists, tourism will remain a long way from being the 'passport to development' proffered by those responsible for its promotion and implementation (de Kadt 1984). Moreover, unless tourism engagement draws upon an ethics of hospitality, much like the ethics of participation and reflexive engagement inherent in ethnographic research, local communities and landowners may respond negatively to the imposition of outsiders in tourist destination areas. For tourism planners, filtering economic objectives through the aperture of relational equity can be challenging, partly because it confronts the often-rhetorical pronouncements of tourism as the pathway for sociocultural improvement, and shifts the focus from than the national economy to the local community as the major beneficiary of tourism development.

To achieve a more optimal balance between national fiscal priorities and local-regional livelihoods, a greater focus should apply to the types of tourism being developed. As noted by MacLeod, "the type of tourism is highly relevant to the type of impact that the tourists have: alternative tourists such as backpackers who stay with local families will have different impacts from package tourists staying in all-inclusive hotels" (MacLeod 2013, p.80).

Anthropologist Rupert Stasch (2013) reminds us that Melanesian villages are “relational entities”, being a realization of social and political principles. This means that the village is part of a broader social and political landscape informed by narratives of custom and change. In Bago village, where I visited as part of world heritage research, the village is the confluence of a larger variety of factors that has shaped social life. For instance, the social and politic dynamics of oil palm has intensified relational transactions with outsiders. As such, the villagers are more embedded in a larger system of multiple spatial and moral possibilities and principles. The visitor encounter is part of this process of self-making, defined around events of the visitor’s coming and going into the social and political space of the village.

**Cosmopolitanism Hospitality as a mode of ethical engagement**



**Figure 1.** The role and place of Hospitable Cosmopolitanism within Alternative Tourisms. Source: adapted from János Csapó 2012

‘Alternative tourism’, with an array of derivative niches (refer to Figure 1), offers tourists a way to engage more ethically through shared connections and conversations. Ecotourism, which is one of these growing niches, is enthusiastically embraced by visitors seeking to learn about different environments and cultural customs. Encapsulating a broad range of activities (such as adventure tourism, cultural tourism, agri-tourism, and village

tourism), ecotourism is popular because it promotes environmental awareness and education, and recognizes the rights of local communities to participate in tourism activities. Fundamentally however, while there is room for resistance, multiple voices and transformative experiences, the space of negotiation remains with the visitor. Ecotourism conceptually, has the potential to empower host communities, but may also diminish local livelihoods (Burns 2015) and leave guests and hosts feeling like spectacles to the other (Wijngaarden 2016). Hospitality, once commodified, involves a saleable 'otherness', involving that of a natural or built world, and/or that of an alien culture. Communication, reciprocal bonds, and cultural resources, all become commodified and appropriated through contemporary capital, mostly without formal consent. The relentless commodification of the traditional, the exotic, and the primitive, threatens the destruction of the very otherness it celebrates (Frow 1997, p.101).

What is needed in models of alternative tourism is a greater awareness of what constitutes a genuine ethics of cosmopolitan hospitality. Lamont and Aksartova (2002, p.1) define cosmopolitanism in terms of a practice "used by ordinary people to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them". It is through a sensitivity to time – an awareness of the past passing into the present in anticipation of a future, that cosmopolitan empathy and shared commitment come into being (Linden-Retek 2015).

Cosmopolitan hospitality in village stays involves the experience of sharing space and developing bonds with local people who may be guides, mediators, knowledge brokers, and other forms of hosts. By staying in a local village over an extended period of time without mains power, a lack of access to external sources of information such as TV or the Internet, fosters communication and negotiation. For the visitor, the village is the only source of potential 'news'. Likewise, villagers and local tour guides are curious to acquire knowledge about the visitor and their customs and cultural practices (Salazar 2010). The village is not only a spatial and gendered landscape, but a landscape of emotions, representations, and concealed knowledge, and it is the ambiguity of this space, in the play between the concealing or revealing that both the guest and host partake in, which makes problematic any fixed exchange value and retains the possibility of contingency. It is in this space that ethical tourism can incorporate the category of equivalence, not in terms of commodified value, but something more akin to the 'gift', as a form of

non-exploitative reciprocity, whereby the inputs and benefits are not strictly calculated, traded or enforced, and remain outside the market system. Time is critical to enable the circuits of reciprocity to establish familiar forms of social bonds between guests and hosts. Other forms of engagement, such as walking and trekking, enable guests and hosts to define each other within the terms of the cultural landscape (Moltz 2009). Taking time, and attachment to place are two critical principles of 'slow tourism' (Matos 2004, p.100). Rafael Matos, the first author to argue for a slow approach to tourism within an academic context, argued that slow tourism is founded on two principles: 'taking time' and 'attachment to place' (Matos 2004, p.100).

### **Hospitable Cosmopolitan in New Britain, Papua New Guinea**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is noted for offering one of the most diverse visitor experiences in the Pacific region with various levels of diving, surfing, unusual cultural experiences, walking tracks, and nature and adventure tourism (WTTC 2016). PNG's Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030, includes Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs) that translate the nation's "Vision 2050" goals into specific programs and action plans. Part 4.9 of the MTDP, which focuses on tourism proposes to increase the overall economic value of tourism to the nation by doubling the number of tourists on holiday in PNG every five years (PNG Department of National Planning and Monitoring 2010, p.113). Tourist arrivals doubled between 2000 and 2008, but significantly declined between 2008-2013 due to a combination of negative publicity and rising exchange rates (Voigt-Graf and Howes 2015). Cruise ship arrivals have bolstered tourist visitations and are now the fastest growing segment of the PNG tourism industry. In 2017, 23 cruise liners were scheduled to visit the island of New Britain (Gabriel et al. 2017a).

Among the factors regarded as necessary to grow the tourism sector, the PNG Tourism Master plan (2007-2017), identifies "a need for the involvement and commitment to the vision by the people of PNG" (PNG TPA 2006, p.7). In turn, the growth of the sector promises to foster the development of linked economic activities such as agriculture, fishing, and other services which support tourism. The reciprocal promise of PNG's national tourism strategy, which requires its citizens to embrace the idea of tourism as a positive force, obliges local communities to become hosts to international visitors in the hope of developing 'sustainable' sources of economic capital that

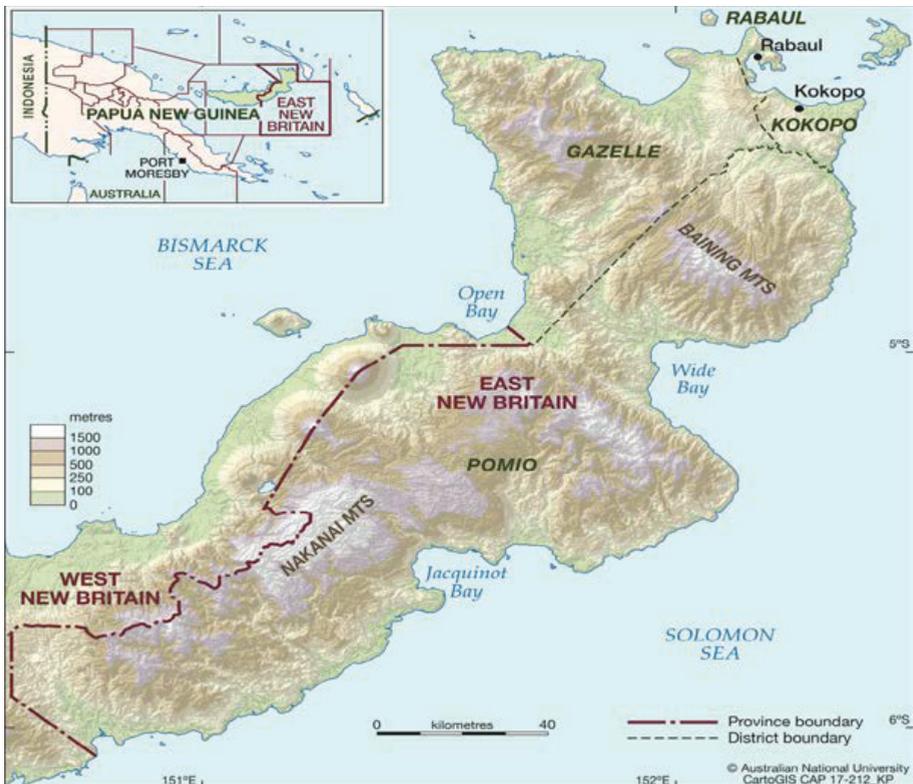
transforms them into active agents of their own futures. Appropriate models of hospitality in remote islands regions are radically different from those designed for provincial capitals. The emerging literature on “primitivist tourism” (Stasch 2014; 2015a; 2015b), which is committed to providing as much attention to the perspectives of visited people as those of the tourists, highlights how encounters depend on “complex divisions of labor and political compromises on the part of hosts around the visitors’ presence” (Stasch 2015a, p.526).

The following case study highlights how the everyday activities of village life can provide the visitor with embodied experiences and intercultural collaborations that are not possible in the mass tourism market, and do not require massive investments in infrastructure or radical forms of ‘cultural realignment’ (MacLeod 2013).

In the remote and rugged interior of New Britain Island, tourism is largely absent, despite the province of East New Britain being declared the national tourism center in 2013. Oil palm and log exports are the main source of income for many of the local communities (Gabriel et al. 2017b), and combinations of boat, truck, and walking are often required for locals attending social events in neighboring villages. Transport limitations make the region more challenging for visitors, with inland road linkages largely restricted to forestry routes and oil palm plantations, and generally in poor condition. In the 1980’s, the Polio region of East New Britain was described as “sparsely populated, extremely remote, and one of the least developed areas of the country” (Vor de Bruegge, Spear and Hamilton 1986, p.42). The upgrade of the Palmaml airport and recent completion of the Pakia-Mamar road from the south coast into the interior, are part of local government initiatives to promote the remote region as a tourist destination.

Historically, exchange relationships on the island of New Britain have extended well beyond the regional boundaries. In the 1870s, long before the first significant settlement of Rabaul (the former capital of New Britain, now buried under volcanic ash and a site of mass tourism [see Gabriel et al 2017a]), merchant traders bartered with villagers during ship passage through the region. Both parties (outsiders and locals) acquired skills in negotiating mutually acceptable deals (Johnson 2013, p.46), as well as developing cultural knowledge of the other. In 1875, Methodist missionaries arrived in

the Rabaul area, marking the arrival and eventual acceptance of Christianity, as well as the first European settlement (Johnson 2013, p.46). In 1878, an adventurous Englishman by the name of Wilfred Powell, who arrived on the island a year earlier, began recording volcanic observations of the active volcanoes of New Britain. Powell named two of the volcanoes called Ulawun and Bamus (also Bamusi) from the myths told to him by Nakanai people of the area (Johnson 2013, p.55).



**Figure 2.** Map of East New Britain Province.

Source: Australian National University, reproduced with permission.

The Mungen people (one of the main language groups in the Polio District) are known ethnographically as keen cultivators of taro (Panoff 1972), which is produced for subsistence purposes, ceremonial obligations and as a political resource. The interaction of Mungen villagers with outsiders pre-exists the

global tourism industry, as well as the colonial administration which introduced new horticultural technologies and attempted to engage Mengen people in cooperative plantation development. The Mengen have a long history of acquiring cosmopolitan knowledge from outsiders. From 1915, during the time of German control, Mengen villagers were recruited as laborers on European plantations on the Gazelle Peninsular of New Britain and New Ireland. Many stayed on the plantations for three to twelve years (the average duration was six years), working side by side with the various cultures of other language groups. Despite labor on the plantations being organized in groups of ethnic origin, cosmopolitan hospitality occurred at ceremonial feasts through one ethnic group inviting the others, and through requests for assistance from foreign sorcerers or medicine men, whenever their own methods failed to bring results (Panoff 1969, p.112). After the completion of their laboring contracts, Mengen brought home and introduced into their gardens and villages, new knowledge and varieties of cultivated plants to enlarge their stocks.



**Figure 3.** Traditional Men's House along a walking track in Bago Village, East New Britain. Source: the author.

Mengen knowledge of plant-based medicines was significantly enriched through interaction and observation with foreign medicine-men. Their expanded pharmaceutical knowledge was frequently acquired through intercultural contact with experts from the Tolai group, and often involved a payment (Panoff 1969, p.115). The Mengen acquired a large quantity of Tolai

love spells and magical techniques. Some learned foreign languages. They were particularly open to foreign influences in music and dancing, learning dozens of different styles from their neighbors (Sulka, Kol and Mamusi). Yet, they were largely indifferent to new musical instruments and other material culture. The multicultural dimensions of island livelihoods include men's houses, walking tracks, and spirit tracks. Well-trodden pathways link story sites, ancestors and cultural activities into a network of connections defined by kinship and exchange relationships.

In the village of Bago, close to the border of East New Britain and West New Britain, the towering stratovolcanoes of Ulawun and Bamusi ('Father' and 'South Son') first documented by Powell, provided the backdrop for two weeks of fieldwork in December 2016, during the monsoon season.



**Figure 4.** The view of Ulawun Volcano from the guest-house veranda  
Source: the author.

Bago village is a traditional rural PNG village. It is located close to oil palm plantations but surrounded by rugged forest and mountain streams. The closest secondary school at Polio is 3-4 days hard trekking through the mountainous terrain from the village.<sup>1</sup> Prolonged rainy seasons create extremely challenging trekking conditions and the gravel road into the community is subject to heavy erosion and severe corrugation from torrential downpours. Daily village life is organized around subsistence livelihoods involving the production of taro for food and ceremonial purposes, with cash remittances from workers at the oil palm plantation contributing to a growing mixed economy. The people of Bago Ward<sup>2</sup> want to improve their standard of living in their respective communities and plan to achieve this through

development of agri-businesses, improvement in their human resources and promotion of other small to medium enterprises on their lands” (Mengen Community Action Plan 2017).

As part of our world heritage research into the cultural values of the Nakanai Mountains, my colleague Michael Wood and I visited Bago village to learn more about the significance of taro cultivation in the lives of Mengen people. The ethnographic material of Francois and Michel Panoff (1960s-1990s), and photographic collections from the Basel Museum (Switzerland) had informed our research, and our own previous fieldwork, on the south coast near Malakur and Palmal in January to February 2016, provided contemporary insights into gardens, spirits, and the role of taro in ceremony and food production. The inland volcanic area around Mount Ulawun was selected to supplement data from the south coast, and to expand our research into the relationship between volcanoes, spirits and taro gardens. Our arrival was organized in advance, however as we were strangers in this remote region of the Nakanai Ranges, assistance by Linus Bai, a local friend from the neighboring Mengen village of Pakia, was crucial in gaining the participation and support of the Bago community.

Our journey began in Kimbe, on the coast of West New Britain, which is aptly referred to as “the oil palm province”, as oil palm is the main driver of the economy. From Kimbe to Mount Ulawun, the physical and social landscape has been transformed by the development of a mixture of large-scale plantations, smallholder blocks and village oil palm schemes. Due to the washout of a small bridge, the drive to our destination involved an overnight detour to a Catholic Mission Station, continuing the following morning in a more suitable 4WD. We arrived in Bago village, which sits on a ridge with spectacular views of the actively puffing Ulawun volcano, known as the ‘Father’ (the highest volcano in PNG), and Bamusi, known as the ‘South Son’. To the north, the forest toppled below, and to the south the mountains reached up to the sky. Our fieldwork involved a two-week stay in a locally owned house positioned with an uninterrupted view of the volcanoes. The house is situated within a fenced off area on a rise along the track which leads to the south coast of Polio (via other villages such as Mile and Pakia). The house belongs to Peter Kaumbe, a medical doctor. It is a family home not a guest house per se, but it fulfils this function as it is the only house in the village that can be used as a transit house. Visitors to date include a small

number of researchers studying the rich flora and fauna of the area, and a few individuals interested in the cave systems that make this region internationally significant.<sup>3</sup>

The initial response of the villagers to our arrival was one of curiosity, but also openly welcoming. We were outsiders inviting ourselves into the community, and since our arrival had been brokered earlier, our engagement with the community was both a product of planning, and our capacity to negotiate a productive encounter. Although the hospitality we received was partially due to the money we were contributing to our hosts through payments for guesthouse accommodation and food, it was also partially a reflection of the hospitality villagers accord to outsiders. In many respects although ‘slow tourism’ also revolves around the exchange of money (the visitor pays for accommodation, food and guides), there is a difference between researchers seeking knowledge and a tourist coming for the in-community experience that the village people have chosen to present. As some have argued however, anthropologists are both tourism participants and observers, whether they like it or not (Nash 1995; Stronza 2001; Burns 2004). Ultimately both tourists and researchers are external agents, and local communities have expectations of them.

The caretaker of the guest house, Otto Rongkire, organized visits to gardens, provided knowledge and information, and introduced us to community members. Daily acts of hospitality between ourselves and our hosts partially transformed our relationship from ‘visitors’, and enabled us to enter into shared moral relationships which involved reciprocal food and knowledge exchange. In such contexts, the way the community exposes itself to, and forms bonds with an outsider, involves uncertainty, negotiation and exchange, which applies to the researcher and tourist alike.

### **Transitioning from Visitor to Guest**

There exists a fine line between embracing the visitor and being uncomfortable with the visitor. The visitor whose identity remains uncertain needs to be qualified because this uncertainty can be problematic in small-scale societies (Boudou 2012). To bring the visitor into the fold of the community and develop a relationship of trust, ritual plays an important role. In his exploration of the role of ritual, Boudou (2012, p.III) uses “rite,” “ritual” or

“ceremony” “as more or less synonymous terms to refer to a set of practices that are spatial, temporal and transformative of participants, including us. The ritual of hospitality according to Boudou, must obey a single principle: “one must not treat the outsider lightly” (2012, p.iii). Rituals of hospitality in the context of guest-host relationships are necessary to demystify and familiarize the stranger.

The focal point of Bago village is the church, which is very typical of many other PNG villages in contemporary times. Our entry into Bago village corresponded to the ordination of a local priest. This important ceremonial occasion involved *tumbuans*, who suddenly appeared out of the forest as the priest was being carried in a wooden chair along the road to the church. *Tumbuans* are made of bark or mesh formed over conical cane frameworks, layered with leaves, and topped with colorful varieties of cordyline leaves. The procession moved gradually down the hill and along the road into the clearing to the church, with the Bago priest, adorned in his priestly attire, and accompanied by fellow priests, as well as clan members and visitors who had come from nearby and distant villages to witness the historic event. After the priests entered the Church, the *tumbuans* quietly disappeared back into the bush. Demarcating space and time, while the local priest was delivering his inaugural mass, the Archbishop from the Catholic Archdiocese in Rabaul was making his annual pilgrimage walk in Polio, trekking through the Nakanai Mountains, and stopping at other villages along the path to Bago, where he would deliver mass the following Sunday.

After mass on the first morning of our arrival the local people treated us with a degree of curiosity appropriate to our category of ‘strangers’. Later in the evening, our status was partially transformed from that of ‘strangers’ to ‘guests’ via an invitation to join the local committee on the stage built high above the ground overlooking the church. The atmosphere in the ceremonial area in the front of the stage was friendly but also highly competitive. Visitors had come from all over New Britain (including the Tolai, Kol, and other Mengen), as well as far away, from Morobe Province on the PNG mainland to celebrate the occasion. Careful attention was paid to the aesthetics of the adorned dancers, as well the dance choreography.



**Figure 5.** Ordination of a local Priest, Bago Village (tumbuan bottom left, priest top right). Source: the author.

Hospitality was extended to the visiting dance groups for this large-scale gathering, as well as ourselves. Using a microphone, the chairman of the organizing committee (who was also one of our guest-house hosts) officially welcomed my colleague and myself, and instructed the villagers to support our research endeavors. In this public space of ritual and ceremony, our host demystified our status (which needed to be familiarized), converting the village encounter with us into a relationship. As Boudou notes: “When dialogue takes place to welcome the outsider, he is in fact sufficiently close to master the ritual, take an active role in the exchange, and therefore be recognized as a full partner”. Dialogue assumes that the visitor is “self-sufficient and truly complementary” (Boudou 2012, p.viii). Hospitality was further extended through an invitation to share in the feast with the organizing committee, which included the consumption of pork and beer. To eat and drink with the visitor and publicly demonstrate their welcome, signifies the beginning of a social bond. This act of hospitality, which enabled us to sit at the same table as our hosts, was not signifying a relationship of social equality but one that could be managed through a morality of exchange and reciprocity.

The following Sunday I was invited by one of the older women to dance with some of the ladies from the community, as the Archbishop made his way into the church. On my return to the guesthouse, our most senior host remarked “Jennifer, they [the village women] are talking about your dance this morning

and saying you danced like a Bago woman”. This statement signified polite inclusiveness on behalf of our hosts.



**Figure 6.** Welcome presentation, Bago Village.

Source: the author.

My relationship was further formalized when Bernadette, the mother of a baby born on the day of our arrival in Bago, chose to name her daughter after me, so that my identity was closely interwoven with that of ‘my namesake’. This entanglement at the level of a name strengthened my integration in the village and knitted us together in a network of mutual care and concern beyond the period of visitation – social bonds were reinforced through the implication of equivalence provided through the name-sake process. Before I could hold my namesake, rituals of exchange between myself and baby Jennifer’s mother, involving a combination of small personal items, kina (PNG currency) and traditional shell money, qualified the relationship within a model of social kinship. I was still an outsider/visitor and it was because of this category that the name sharing and identity was established, but our bond became significantly strengthened.

Within the village setting, the social relationships required to negotiate knowledge, shelter and advice generated expanding mutual trust. Asymmetry of the relationship became less marked over time, however reliance on our hosts was maintained as a necessary condition of fieldwork. Our inexperience in understanding the weather for example, or the optimum timing to embark

on walking to taro gardens created a reliance on our hosts' knowledge and their willingness to provide access. In this respect, Mengen hospitality can facilitate a case of "reversed hierarchy, that is, the inversion of the asymmetry contained in the hierarchy" (Boudou 2012, p.xii). The vignette below highlights how collapsed hierarchies can be embodied as well as symbolic.

Our alterity was sometimes marked in humorous moments linked to our capacities to be able to productively engage in the landscape with a degree of competence. On one occasion, while waiting at the local primary school for the children to receive their completion certificates (which did not manifest due to postal delays), we were provided with plastic chairs to rest in the shade. The chairs, which differentiated and stratified our status as 'guest' from the locals who sat on the ground, were positioned on the flat grass beside a grassy hill overlooking the sports field. The craft of chair-sitting on the side of a hill is somewhat precarious for Westerners, accustomed to sitting on flat surfaces in the safety of an office. When sat on incorrectly, there is a tendency for the chair to become wobbly and unstable. The moment of structural collapse, when my colleague was jettisoned sideways past me in a running kind of fall, was even more comical when I attempted to grab hold of his hand in a futile effort to reduce the impact. Much to the entertainment of local children sitting in front of us on the ground, the momentum was such that I was instantly ejected from my seat and flung onto the ground, failing completely in the art of the graceful fall. The locals politely restricted their amusement until I stood up and confirmed I was unhurt. Care and concern for the guest was profoundly evident in their response. Equally, we were concerned not to display any personal reactions that could cause discomfort for our hosts.

### **Walking, trekking and knowledge exchange**

Space in traditional Melanesian society is not perceived by its divisions, nor by its limits, but by relations along the route.  
(Bonnemaison and Crowe 1994, p.22)

As a form of 'slow travel', walking can produce a high degree of intimacy between guests and hosts (Weißborn 2015), such as when the tourist comes to rely on the host for safe passage, or when the host shares personal stories about their own desires, beliefs and concerns. In such contexts, both the host and guest are involved in the co-creation of a journey.

Hospitality does not take place in just any space and nor does it involve transgression of non-meaningful boundaries. What gives the space and boundaries their meaning is their affective-relational structure in that they constitute lines between feelings of belonging and non-belonging, comfort and discomfort, security and insecurity, ease and awkwardness. (Bulley 2015, p.6-7)



**Figure 7.** Taro Garden, Bago Village.

Source: the author.

Our research into subsistence practices involved daily treks through the tropical temperate forests to document local knowledge about taro gardening, practices and beliefs. The taro gardens are planted on the slopes of mountainous terrain and volcanic soils. High rainfall, particularly in December during the monsoon season, makes trekking up and down slippery dirt tracks challenging for the visitor and creates a reliance on the local host to provide guidance and advice on where to walk, and how to walk safely. Ever attentive to our welfare, our host Otto whittled walking sticks from the branches of tree saplings. The stick had to be sturdy and just the right length for our height. Twigs and leaves were swiftly removed by sliding a machete down the side of the bark. At many points along the way we stopped, out of breath and starkly out of shape compared to our hosts.

Sitting and resting with our hosts patiently waiting, became a necessary part of our daily schedule. By discussing what would be a good garden to visit, we participated meaningfully in the experience. The way knowledge transactions and experiences are defined in these sensually and feeling-full emplaced contexts contributes to the ways in which island environments become sites of cosmopolitan engagement.

What makes walking and trekking experiences unique is the intensive sensory engagement with the cultural and physical conditions of the landscape (Bold and Gillespie 2009). As Malpas (1999, p.15) emphasizes, landscape is “that in which ... ‘being in the world’ is grounded”. Walkers often experience deep, multi-sensual immersion in the cultural landscape, and make meaningful social connections during their journey (Weißborn 2015, p.16). The co-production of the journey through specific socio-cultural economies of time and space disrupts the power relationships between guest and host, creating a highly particular, contingent space involving a culture-centered approach to understanding landscape forms and shapes.



**Figure 8.** Anthropologist Michael Wood making social connections.  
Source: the author.

**Concluding thoughts: “We are all tourists now”**

Tourism is potentially both a cosmopolitan-making and a worldmaking industry. It is global in scope, both universalizing and particularistic, with political economy, cultural and ethical dimensions. As such, it deserves serious analysis, although there has been little general work on these intersections of tourism with cosmopolitanism beyond brief excursions, until recently. (Swain 2009, p.507)

Through a comparison between fieldwork experiences and tourist modalities of slow travel, this paper has contributed insights into the often-mundane interactions between guests and hosts that contribute to collaborative social spaces in remote places where tourists may visit, and may be encouraged to visit by local communities seeking a pathway to development. Ethical approaches to guest-host interactions are those that do not contribute to the local people feeling “out of place”, and subject to the transformation of their space into a stage for voyeuristic pleasure, as so often happens when outsiders occupy a position of economic privilege (d’Hautesserre 2006, p.150). Like ethnographic fieldwork, the ideal form of cultural tourism is where both hosts and guests participate in forms of cosmopolitan hospitality, defined within a moral framework of care and concern. Cosmopolitan hospitality, controlled and managed by local communities provides opportunities to maintain and potentially enrich the attachment of social collectives to practices and forms, while adding value to social bonds. In this sense, ‘remoteness’ in countries such as PNG can be an asset in the pursuit of more ethical models of cultural tourism.

I have argued that for ethnographers and tourists alike, the ideal guest-host encounter involves the transformation of the visitor experience to conform to the cultural landscape, which is fully under control of the hosts. The act of hospitality in its unfolding, converts an encounter with visitors (tourists and researchers alike) into a qualified relationship involving negotiated exchanges of value. The power that tourists wield through the way they look at locals and expect them to appear and behave (the ‘tourist gaze’), becomes mediated in forms of slow tourism, whereby visitors come to rely on the knowledge of local hosts for comfort, learning, and safe passage. In such spaces, where the hosts knowledge is given precedence over the agenda of outsiders, the balance

of knowledge-power is partially destabilized to favor the cultural uniqueness and priorities of host communities (Wearing and Wearing 2006). Timing and time was contingent upon the weather, our slow walking, and other events.

Travelers and researchers who utilize forms of exploration such as walking (to gardens, the village school and church, for instance) actively participate in embodied activities where hierarchies can be reversed and the guest and host can redefine each other within the terms of the cultural landscape. In her study of guest-host relationships in a rural Indian community, Chaudhuri (2017, p.5) suggests that by navigating through multiple perspectives of human-environment relationships, many villagers have become 'ecologically cosmopolitan' (Saiz 2008) while strongly maintaining their place-based attitudes to their local forest. Some eco-guides even saw their interactions with the "interested" tourists as learning opportunities (Chaudhuri 2017, p.8). During our fieldwork experience, the 'sphere of coexistence' opened up spaces of negotiation and representation that generated shared purpose and cross-cultural collaborations. The significance of alliance, location, gender, and age, refigured the seemingly mundane activities of everyday life into the establishment of new relationships that involved the assessment of risk, the establishment of trust, and exchanges of hospitality between ourselves and our hosts. Knowledge exchange was negotiated in the context of our research objectives, an expected future return, and the spatial politics of the village.

Out of place, both tourists and researchers may appear to some host societies as mysterious groups of Others isolated from all the other Others of the planet (Bulley 2015). However, as Marilyn Strathern (1999) pointed out, the first Europeans to PNG may have been surprised to find out that their arrival had been anticipated, and that they were previously "known beings" who were deceased and "returned" - manifested in a new form. Distinct from Western perspectives of radical alterity, anthropologists such as Strathern emphasize an intrinsic sociality where it is just a matter of making the relationship clear and visible, and then making it effective.

Like others, I have emphasized that what bridges the conceptual divide between visitors and locals is acts of 'hospitality', which transforms a space into a sphere of coexistence (Bulley 2015). By participating in the practices and routines of everyday life in host communities, including social discourse, social events (ceremonies, rituals, feasts), and walking/trekking, collaborative

systems of social and cultural meaning can be forged (de Certeau 1998). In practice, the interplay of the experiential self with the 'social', can transform the space of tourism by diminishing the space of Otherness (Wearing and Wearing 2006, p.151). This is not to say that inequality and power relations cease to exist, but as relations between self and other, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion become transgressed and temporarily transformed through guest-host exchanges, a shared space is brought into being (Bulley 2015, p.6).

Both cosmopolitan hospitality and ethnographic research champion a slow and shared approach to human social relations and reciprocal trust, and both share an ethical concern with the relationships we forge. In anthropological studies of tourism, relationships between hosts and guests, and how they form and change over time will continue to be of high significance to the discipline, not because of the Otherness of tourists or exoticness of Others, but because of our shared responsibility in facilitating ethical spaces of cosmopolitan hospitality within models of cultural tourism. Ultimately - as Levi-Strauss foreshadowed and others conclude: "We are all tourists, now, and there is no escape" (Ryan and Huyton 2002). Both anthropologists and tourists cannot be dissociated from the impacts that tourism has on the lived cultural environment. The similarity between anthropologists who engage in fieldwork and ethical modes of cultural engagement for tourists lies in the potential for embodied collective reflexivity and knowledge production, as redefined by the host-guest relationship. It is within this space of hospitable cosmopolitanism that a more equitable model of cultural tourism may be found.

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1. The mountains reach an altitude of 2185 metres in the north, and the slopes descending to the south coast are cut by canyons that are more than 100 metres deep (Audra and Maire 2004, p.1152).

2. Bago Ward shares boundaries of both East and West New Britain Provinces. The Bago Ward comprises the Mengen villages of Bago, Vamakuma, Lele, Muela, Kematanme, Manu, Pata, Painave, Bageta villages and the Kol village of Malvoni, Mansapana and Tuke. The total population of overall Bago Ward is 3,804 as per the 2015 Ward Census (Mengen Community Action Plan 2017, p.9).

3. The Nakanai Range contains a globally unique system of limestone caves extending from the mountain summits to the southern coastline (Gill 2012, p.1). In 2006 the Nakanai Range was listed within 'The Sublime Karsts of PNG' as a Tentative World Heritage.

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