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Bram Büscher, Renée van den Bremer, Robert Fletcher & Stasja Koot

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ARTICLE

AUTHENTICITY AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF THE "ECOTOURISM SCRIPT": GLOBAL MARKETING AND LOCAL POLITICS IN GHANA

Bram Büscher
Wageningen University, the Netherlands
University of Johannesburg, South Africa
Stellenbosch University, South Africa
bram.buscher@wur.nl

Renée van den Bremer
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
the Netherlands
reneevdbremer@gmail.com

Robert Fletcher
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5365-1697
Wageningen University, the Netherlands
robert.fletcher@wur.nl

Stasja Koot
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8625-7525
Wageningen University, the Netherlands
kootwork@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Tourism in Ghana has been developing rapidly over the last decade. By marketing over a dozen "community ecotourism" sites, particularly around monkey and forest sanctuaries, Ghana hopes to attract travellers to spend money in the country and so aid local development and protect natural resources. This paper analyses this trend, outlining several contradictions in the country's national branding of "authenticity" in ecotourism and how this takes local shape in the case of the Tafi-Atome monkey sanctuary in Eastern Ghana. We propose that actors on different levels in Ghana appear to market and brand ecotourism according to a "script" that directs and influences local ecotourism practices in ways that obscure these contradictions and thereby enable continuation of and belief in the script. We conclude that this "ecotourism script" is central to the promotion and implementation of ecotourism in general, and needed to maintain the belief that the activity is an important conservation and development panacea.

Keywords: ecotourism; Ghana; marketing; politics; development; authenticity

INTRODUCTION

West Africa is not known as a global tourism hotspot. Yet, even in this region, tourism has long been a booming business. In general, tourism to Africa is growing significantly

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and, as the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) documents, in 2016 sub-Saharan Africa even led global growth with an increase of 11 per cent (UNWTO 2017). Although among the main draws to sub-Saharan Africa are its wildlife and natural scenery (Büscher 2011), "authentic" African cultures attract tourists as well (Van Beek and Schmidt 2012). This is true of Ghana in particular (Steegstra 2012).

Indeed, tourism in this region—and especially ecotourism—depends on certain constructions of "Africa", which Dunn (2004, 487) asserts are reminiscent of colonial images of the continent "presented as an exoticised destination in which to see and consume both 'nature' and the 'native'. This disposition … entails the practice of commodifying Africa and marketing it for Western consumption." In turn, the touristic appeal of "pristine nature" helps to pressure African governments to conserve the source of this international exchange. In a recent briefing paper, for example, the UNWTO (2015, 3), a leading tourism institute globally, reiterated the importance of Africa's market position based on "nature, national parks and wildlife [that] are considered the most important tourism assets for tourists travelling to Africa."

The global popularity of ecotourism has risen steeply in recent decades, with the practice seen by many as an ideal way to integrate challenges of economic development and environmental conservation (Honey 2008). Indeed, few conservation projects today do not include an ecotourism component (Fletcher 2014). In line with these trends, ecotourism plans have increasingly dominated policy in West Africa (Ghana Web 2015). This paper examines the marketing and branding of ecotourism in Ghana specifically. To analyse this promotion at the grassroots level, we focus on the Tafi-Atome monkey sanctuary project in the east of the country. Building on Bruner (2005; Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994), we argue that the promotion of the conservation and development objectives of ecotourism, both in Ghana generally and in Tafi-Atome specifically, functions like a "script" that is simultaneously followed and challenged. Tourism, both nature-based and cultural, is commonly described as the "stage" for theatrical experience or performance (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; MacCannell 1976; Picard, Pocock, and Trigger 2014). What the idea of a "script" adds to this analysis is an appreciation of how this performance can function to sustain the belief that (eco)tourism is an effective vehicle for conservation and development despite its actual functioning in practice. In addition, the script functions as a source of value creation in its own right, based on its capacity to generate institutional support and funding for ecotourism ventures.

In what follows, we first introduce our methodology and theorise ecotourism by highlighting two contradictions in its common promotion as a conservation and development strategy. We then position the (eco)tourism branding and marketing of Ghana in a global context before turning to our case study of Tafi-Atome. We conclude by highlighting the implications of our "script" analysis for understanding the marketing of ecotourism and development more broadly.

METHODOLOGY

As Bruner (2005, 12) explains, "to view tourism solely within the frame of interaction among the various actors is too narrow"; hence, it "must be seen in its larger political and economic context as mediating between the global and the local." In our analysis, we therefore pursued discourse analysis of tourism promotion via key websites and policy documents addressing (eco)tourism in Ghana, exploring how marketing of the national "brand" is situated within the global tourism context. Relevant websites, including the official government site of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts (www.touringghana.com), commercial media sites, and local NGO sites (including that of NCRC, the dominant NGO for the Tafi-Atome monkey sanctuary) were selected based on two main criteria: their prominence in addressing and promoting ecotourism development in the country (including from official sources) and the perceived likelihood that tourists would use them, since they were indicated on official brochures and leaflets and come up prominently on popular search engines such as Google. Moreover, these websites were chosen to show framings from different actors in the field: commercial stakeholders, the media, the government, or NGOs. Taken together, they provide a good example of the different actors involved in the ecotourism script. Policy documents were subjected to similar selection criteria. To subsequently understand how this relates to local practice, we add insights from exploratory ethnographic fieldwork in Tafi-Atome, conducted from January to March 2009. This case study was selected because it is one of the ecotourism projects most frequently advertised or referenced on the websites and in the policy documents reviewed. Moreover, it is a clear ecotourism example from which we can analyse how the global and national discourse relates to local dynamics. However, because the idea of the ecotourism script cannot be arrived at from only one case study, we also draw on examples from other tourism projects around the world discussed in the academic literature.

Tafi-Atome is situated in the Volta Region of Ghana, and at the time of the research contained some 2 000 inhabitants. The village is part of a so-called "traditional area", and reflects a fairly typical Ghanaian rural village in which many people rely on subsistence farming. Participant observation was central to data collection, in addition to household surveys conducted at the start of the fieldwork. A local research assistant was crucial, acting as not only a translator but also a key informant. Finally, another 26 in-depth semi-structured interviews were held with key actors.

ECOTOURISM AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

Ecotourism has been the subject of a fast-growing literature (Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008; Carrier and Macleod 2005; Duffy 2002; Duffy 2006; Fletcher 2009; Fletcher 2014; Koot 2016). In engaging this literature, we echo West and Carrier (2004, 484), who state that one of the "most intriguing" approaches "sees ecotourism as the institutional expression of particular sets of late capitalist values in a particular political-economic

climate. This approach situates ecotourism in its broader context and thus encourages us to consider the relationships among the rhetoric of ecotourism, the values of ecotourists, and the ways in which these are manifest in ecotourism projects."

This perspective, in turn, must be situated within the broader context of the global neoliberal political economy. Duffy (2006, 131) argues that "tourism and ecotourism are underpinned by a market oriented strategy that neatly fits with the outlook of neoliberalism", a position echoed by a growing chorus of researchers (Carrier and Macleod 2005; Cater 2006; Duffy 2013; Fletcher 2014; Fletcher and Neves 2012; Koot 2016). According to neoliberal logic, ecotourism can—through "free" market mechanisms—provide a strong motivation for conservation by selling "natural" experiences to tourists while allowing often poor rural communities living close to natural resources to profit from these resources and so "develop". This is why ecotourism is such an intriguing prospect in developing countries endowed with attractive natural areas: it suggests that nature can be conserved and development achieved without investing scarce governmental resources (West and Carrier 2004, 484).

In analysing ecotourism's neoliberal underpinnings, commentators have highlighted some glaring contradictions (Fletcher and Neves 2012; Koot 2016). Here we focus on two. First, Butcher (2005) highlights a contradiction in ecotourism's development potential. When local people "develop", he argues, they ostensibly negatively influence their environment, since this development is based on Western, neoliberal ideas in which economic growth and consumerism are considered *the* path to development. Ironically, this same development in the West is seen to have led to the noble ideas of environmentalism and sustainability underlying the practice and promotion of ecotourism.

A second contradiction concerns how ecotourism relies on the perceived "authenticity" of local populations. Westerners, including tourists, commonly understand modernity as a state of instability and *in*authenticity, compelling a conviction that reality and authenticity are always elsewhere, in the past or in simpler, "purer" cultures that exist far away (MacCannell 1976, 3). Driven by "consumer culture", "the 21st century is an age that hungers for anything that *feels* authentic, just as we lament more and more that it is a world of inauthenticity … despite our endless efforts to the contrary" (Banet-Weiser 2012, 3). The (supposedly) small scale of many ecotourism projects allows tourists to have a closer, more "personal" experience with nature and the ostensibly "purer", "simpler" people living near it, an experience often promoted as authentic (Hüncke and Koot 2012). Yet it is precisely through touristic commodification that these "authentic" ecotourism expressions and the actors who deliver them can acquire "global semblances" and thus become "inauthentic". In this sense, we consider authenticity not as static but as flexible, in line with what Cohen (1988) called "emergent authenticity". In this understanding of authenticity, "a cultural product, or a trait thereof, which is at one point generally judged as contrived or inauthentic may, in the course of time, become generally recognized as authentic" (Cohen 1988, 379).

However, while neoliberal ecotourism expansion triggers these contradictions, proponents often obscure these inconsistencies to frame ecotourism as a balanced and attractive proposition for tourists, private companies, local people, NGOs, and governments. Carrier and Macleod (2005) thus describe an "ecotourism bubble" in which the actual context and realities of ecotourism are commonly excluded and the natural, cultural, and economic aspects of ecotourism experiences and sites idealised. Indeed, there is often strong pressure for local people to construct such a bubble to achieve success, rather than for tourists to accept the contradictory realities they help to expand through ecotourism activities.

Obfuscation entails the reduction of complex environments and people into recognisable categories such as "nature" and "simple" (West and Carrier 2004, 491). Western assumptions are thus projected onto both nature and culture, facilitating straightforward and pleasant experiences for tourists. Here, we seek to look beyond simplification in the staging of ecotourism, emphasised in previous research, to explore the underlying processes that make this simplification possible. We suggest that ecotourism delivery commonly entails performance according to a certain generified "script". The concept of a script allows us to understand ecotourism as actively staged by various stakeholders, and hence contributes to current discussions that predominantly see tourism marketing discourses as disconnected from reality without describing how faith in their viability is sustained despite this characteristic disconnect.

While the concept of an ecotourism script highlights emerging constructions of "authenticity" in culture (Cohen 1988), this is not the same as the "staged authenticity" common in tourism studies (MacCannell 1976). Whereas staged authenticity emphasises *local* dynamics of host–guest interaction, our script concept points to *global* constructions of authenticity depicted in tourist marketing strategies (Goffman 1959, 32). Staged authenticity, then, is not only a "local" exposition of host–guest encounters, but is also based on a broader script. Moreover, "local" staged authenticity cannot be regarded as if it remains immune from the influence of the broader script, which makes it essentially a form of emergent authenticity (Cohen 1988). This supports the idea that authenticity is in fact always "emerging", not least because the script also reflects a particular set of ideas and values—such as economic growth as *the* driver for development, or African cultures as authentic and closely related to nature—that tends to dominate institutional ecotourism interventions, thereby creating and re-creating ideas, values, images, and representations within (eco)tourism.

We agree with others (Bruner 2005; Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994) that the concept of authenticity is problematic because it commonly asserts a distinction between "real" and "unreal" realms that could otherwise be regarded as equally constructed. However, the concept remains highly important as an "emic" category commonly employed in tourism marketing, particularly within our ecotourism script, which includes "authenticity" as a core concept. In this sense, again, authenticity becomes dynamic rather than static, continually invented and re-invented in response

to market forces that arbitrate its meaning and value (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Driven by financial imperatives, the tourism industry develops "metanarratives" or "master stories", based on the authenticity of nature and culture, from which tourists collect information before their trip. These stories are based on ideas about the African primitive, tropical island paradises, and so on, and, aggregated into an overarching imaginary (Fletcher 2014; Salazar and Graburn 2014), "serve *as a script* for the tourist production" from which "much cultural content is left out or masked" (Bruner 2005, 22; emphasis added).

In this way, marketing and branding companies, in alliance with other influential actors such as *National Geographic*, travel writers, government tourism bureaus, airlines, and so forth, help to create representations of authenticity in the form of a script. This script shapes tourist expectations and ideas about nature, culture, and authenticity and thus mediates material realities at local tourist sites. As Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994, 467) describe in relation to Maasai tourism, "the lines that they speak are written for them by the real producer of Mayers Ranch, the tourist industry. … They did not invent the story that they tell … they must follow the script." Or, as a San camp manager in Namibia asks, "Should we change because of tourists or should tourists accept how we are?" (as quoted in Hüncke and Koot 2012, 682). The answer, we argue, is that *if* people choose to work in tourism, this generally means they have to follow the script, meaning that they should indeed "change because of tourists". In the following section, we apply this conceptual framework to analyse ecotourism development in Ghana.

MARKETING ECOTOURISM IN GHANA

Unable to boast "big five" safari experiences, Ghana is mostly praised—or praises itself—for its cultural and natural authentic "Africanness". In this way, Ghana is now trying to become a more mainstream destination by developing 15-year tourism development plans (Republic of Ghana 2012). Adu-Ampong (2017) noted a recent increase in prioritising tourism as a development strategy in government leaders' speeches, in which marketing and branding are seen as crucial. Hence a key message in the 15-year plan is that "[t]he marketing budget should be increased to implement the branding and marketing strategies. If Ghana is not known in the markets, it will not be included in the 'shopping-list' of prospective customers. Therefore marketing is the key!" (Republic of Ghana 2012, xii).

It is here that the idea of a "script" and the contradictions embedded in it immediately become apparent: on the one hand, Ghana needs to be unique, fresh, and different, but on the other hand, Ghana must also be similar, trusted, and respond to global commercial customs. This contradiction characterises many key elements of the 15-year plan, and is in fact why Ghana is currently not living up to its potential (Republic of Ghana 2012, 186):

> Ghana urgently needs an extensive promotion campaign to promote and establish its brand image. The opportunity cost associated with a lack of tourism marketing is large and Ghana's competitors are cashing in on hard currency and job creation that could no doubt accrue to the country. Without improving Ghana's brand equity and elevating the country's tourism image internationally and domestically, the country's tourism potential will not be realised and developmental efforts will suffer due to market ignorance.

Branding Ghana is therefore key to the development of tourism. Since the report, Ghanaian tourism agencies have been working on elevating "the country's tourism image". Key in this endeavour is a recognisable story that emphasises both difference and sameness. According to the summary of the 15-year plan, this tension between sameness and difference makes development around the following themes possible: "Ghana is blessed with excellent natural, cultural and heritage resources such as historical forts and castles, national parks, a beautiful coastline, unique arts, cultural traditions as well as a vibrant lifestyle, which when further developed and properly packaged and marketed, will continue to form the basis of tourism offer that will attract a range of markets" (Republic of Ghana 2012, vii).

However, marketing alone does not make a tourism destination. Hence Ghana now also brands itself as "a pioneer in the field of community-based ecotourism, which aims to create a mutually beneficial three-way relationship between conservationists, tourists and local communities" (Touring Ghana 2016). Although diverse organisations and people are active on the Ghanaian ecotourism market, the Ghanaian NGO Nature Conservation and Research Centre (NCRC) has been a particular driving force behind the inclusion of communities in conservation in the country, predominantly through ecotourism. According to the organisation's website, "ownership, management and operation of these rural tourist destinations reside solely in the communities themselves" (NCRC 2017a). The NCRC has a history of cooperation with several divisions of the Ghanaian government, such as the Ministry of Tourism and the Wildlife Division. This has given it a strong position in terms of trustworthiness and accountability, which has allowed it to become an attractive local partner for international funding organisations.

One of the NCRC's most important donors is USAID, and the NCRC seems to have been quite heavily influenced by the rhetoric that accompanies USAID funding for ecotourism projects. The guideline developed by USAID to be considered for funding is an apt example (USAID 2005, 45):

> One way to increase capture of those benefits is through relatively simple, market-based mechanisms (such as park entrance fees and concession fees), known collectively as tourism user fees. The fees partially reflect the cost for supplying recreational services, the demand for natural resources, and the value that visitors place on their experience at the site. The direct link between conservation and income from user fees provides conservation with a strong economic rationale. With ecotourism growing so rapidly, and with the wide range of fees available, tourism user fees provide a conservation finance mechanism with perhaps the broadest application and highest overall revenue potential.

In this policy document, ecotourism is offered as a conservation method that actually provides revenue and reinterprets human–nature relations according to an "economic rationale", which is in effect an institutional expression of the neoliberal values that West and Carrier (2004, 484) highlight. We argue that this is where the ecotourism script comes into play: prescriptions that are produced by institutions involved in ecotourism in order to minimise the gap between rhetoric and reality. While we propose this as a conceptual heuristic referring to the disciplining mechanisms at play in instituting ecotourism governance, the example of Tafi-Atome can help us go beyond abstract heuristics to understand how this script plays out in practice.

THE POLITICS OF ECOTOURISM IN TAFI-ATOME

This section examines the Tafi-Atome ecotourism project to demonstrate how the ecotourism script plays out and what its limits are in practice, showing how local political reality relates to questions of authenticity and the ecotourism contradictions highlighted earlier. The Tafi-Atome project, founded in 1996 by the NCRC and funded by USAID, amongst others, has the intention to protect the forest and the True Mona monkeys adjacent to the village while providing development opportunities for the community. This is done by promoting the village as a "monkey sanctuary", where travellers can come to enjoy the playful monkeys, the lush forest, and the rustic village. A visitor centre and overnight accommodation were built, guides were trained, and the chiefs (the traditional local authority) selected a number of community members to manage the day-to-day business of the sanctuary.

Natives and Strangers

One of the most central illustrations of how the ecotourism rhetoric is implemented in practice is the management structure that has been created for the project. The NCRC has a strong emphasis on community inclusion as the underlying rationale for this structure. Ecotourism rhetoric often envisions a harmonious community that is able to sustain a project with a focus on the generation of tourism income as a basis for conservation. The structure established in Tafi-Atome is a material expression of this rhetoric. The link between rhetoric and practice is especially clear in the "constitution" of the NCRC, the chiefs, and the tourism committee (consequently renamed the "board"), which was signed in 2010. It states: "We the Chiefs, elders and people of Tafi-Atome have come together to establish a community ecotourism project for the conservation and protection of natural resources within the designated forest of Tafi-Atome, especially the monkeys as well as creating economic opportunities in a spirit of togetherness by constituting ourselves into a Board" (NCRC 2010).

This text shows how rhetorical terms such as "together" and "community" are translated into practice through mechanisms such as "board" and "tourism committee". However, within this translation there is apparently little doubt that rhetoric and reality

match seamlessly, which shows how part of the ecotourism rhetoric, and thus part of the structure of the project, is based on a certain belief that a community is harmonious and egalitarian. This is a tendency that has been recognised and criticised for its common role in conservation policy (Adams and Hulme 2001), since looking at communities in this manner blinds one to the ever-present differentiation within communities. Moreover, the rhetoric of "community-based" projects is often conflated with ideas about democracy, which works well in a script for the (mostly Western-based) donors. However, as we will see, in this project the chiefs have a disproportionate influence and thus it can hardly be classified as democratic.

The NCRC, with its focus on the authentic and harmonious community, has overlooked the numerous segregations that exist among the population of Tafi-Atome. The most pronounced segregation with the largest impact on the project is the clear distinction made by villagers between Tafi-Atome's original inhabitants (the eight clans that first settled in the area) and the people who migrated there later. The chiefs are selected from the eight clans, and as they, in turn, select the members of the tourism committee, the division between the original inhabitants and the immigrants reproduces itself in the project. What this means in practice is that out of the 73 local people who have been involved in the project in some way or another over its lifetime, only one was an immigrant; furthermore, development initiatives such as latrines and electricity have been centred around the part of the village where most of the people are "native" (Van den Bremer 2009). Moreover, even within the group of people who are descended from Tafi-Atome's original inhabitants, divisions and struggles can be found. For example, the selection of committee members and guides led to gossip and disgruntlement among all parts of the population, especially regarding the handling of tourism income. As one "native" villager's statement illustrates: "[W]hen the community money comes … they use the money not in any good aspect" (interview, February 10, 2009).

This shows that Tafi-Atome's community is in fact very diverse and thus contrasts with the image portrayed by the NCRC. For the NCRC it is important to uphold an image of a peaceful, authentic, homogenous community in its relations with tourists. While the official structure of the project reflects this image, the behaviour and views of the people that are supposed to uphold this structure initially do not, which is why the structure can be seen as part and parcel of the ecotourism script. This script thus serves the function of providing instructions among disparate communities, compelling them to comply with a format that disregards their diversity, thus conforming to "global semblances" that do not coincide with the particular reality of local politics.

Different Versions of History

The creation of nature conservation areas and (eco)tourism are commonly accompanied by power struggles in which different versions of history co-exist among various stakeholders. For example, in Mozambique, the creation of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and its potential for ecotourism have led to very different views

being held by local villagers and the more powerful proponents of the park regarding the earlier evictions. Whereas for the first group the evictions form the core of their stories, the latter seems to treat these as inconvenient, neglecting to mention them in their rhetoric of development and nature conservation (Lunstrum 2010). Having assessed how the structure of the project can be interpreted as a script, we now discuss how Tafi-Atome is portrayed within this context.

Since its founding, the Tafi-Atome monkey sanctuary has been marketed by the NCRC as an example of putting traditional beliefs to use for the conservation of nature (Fennell 2008), drawing on the village's religious history. As the NCRC states on its website: "Conservation also must emerge from local cultural belief systems, so that culture and economics are linked as core elements. … For example NCRC built on traditional taboos against harming sacred monkeys to create highly successful ecotourism projects in Ghana's Tafi Atome and Boabeng-Fiema communities" (NCRC 2017b). The manner in which Tafi-Atome is promoted sketches an image of an authentic but primitive place where people used to believe the monkeys were messengers to the "fetish gods", until the coming of Christianity (NCRC n.d). A leaflet produced by the NCRC near the end of the 1990s states that people believed that the monkeys were sacred, and that they always accompanied the traditional gods. However, then: "[A]round ten years ago Christianity overpowered the traditional beliefs. A few villagers began to chop down the trees in the forest for firewood and to clear farmland and kill the monkeys just to prove that they no longer feared the fetish gods" (NCRC n.d).

The oral history of Tafi-Atome, as espoused by its inhabitants, contrasts sharply with the NCRC's version. For one, the traditional priest explained that no divine status has ever been given to the monkeys, as the monkeys are something beautiful to the traditional gods, but are not their messengers (Van den Bremer 2009, 28). Furthermore, there was no clear dividing line between people's beliefs and behaviour *before* and *after* the coming of Christianity. Most people in Tafi-Atome have incorporated both traditionalism and Christianity in their beliefs, not seeing these as conflicting. Even people who do not believe in any traditional entity state that they respect the beliefs of their neighbours, and would thus not intentionally harm anything they find important. This would mean that at the time of the implementation of the ecotourism project people respected the part of the forest considered sacred—something that is confirmed by a clear majority of informants.

Rather than the forest suffering under changing beliefs, it was factors such as population growth that led to encroachment on the forest and the killing of monkeys that left the sacred grove. These practices—carried out for sustenance—were not seen as disrespecting the traditional gods. Although this situation eventually led to a worsening situation for the monkeys and the need for the NCRC's intervention, the NGO's portrayal of this history is in stark contrast with Tafi-Atome's own version, and much of the nuance has been lost. Thus, not local history but rather other versions of it are being portrayed for tourists. The importance of positioning local people as authentic—and, implicitly, the modern West (here symbolised by the introduction of Christianity) as

inauthentic—also plays an important role in the simplification of Tafi-Atome's history, which shows the contradiction between ecotourism's promise of development on the one hand, and the idealisation of an underdeveloped state on the other hand.

This rhetorical discrepancy in versions of history was resolved through the training of tourist guides to ensure that they relate the preferred script to visiting tourists. In this way, guides are instructed to behave in certain ways towards tourists, despite their having different beliefs and knowledge about the history and current situation of their village. As one guide stated when asked about the monkeys: "No, I had never heard this story before. My grandmother told me that the monkeys never followed us, they were already here, and they were never messengers to the gods" (fieldnotes, March 19, 2009).

This situation is not unique to Tafi-Atome or to Ghana. Salazar (2006) found that tour guides in Tanzania also (re)construct and exoticise the authenticity of local natural landscapes and cultures, according to global popular culture and tourist expectations. In fact, in Tanzania student guides learn how to reconstruct global discourses about African nature and cultural heritage through foreign, mostly Western, guidebooks, documentaries, and so on, which tourists consequently assume to be part of the local authentic knowledge and narratives of the guides. Both "are usually unaware of the classificatory schemes and *scripts* behind the generalized representations used" (Salazar 2006, 842; emphasis added). In the end "almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in what is being contrived before them" (Goffman 1959, 78).

The Youth

The third and final example that we will discuss to illustrate the workings of the ecotourism script in Tafi-Atome is the role that "the youth" plays in showing its limitations. "The youth" refers to a male-dominated group that came forth from the native, "authentic" part of the community and is led by a number of informally selected leaders. When these leaders feel that issues in the village are not being managed properly, they form a group to talk to the chiefs. In this sense, the youth can be considered an institution, as they have an impact on the prescriptions that people use to organise interactions. However, as the youth steps in and out of existence depending on the situation, it remains elusive. It is this elusiveness that has made the youth a force to be reckoned with, as it acts like a watchdog keeping an eye on the daily business of the village.

There are several cases in the monkey sanctuary's history where the project's management had to deal with the youth, and where this group was able to exert influence to such a degree that the actual daily practice of the project was disturbed. The most spectacular instance occurred in 2003, when the youth actually took over the visitor centre, ousting the tourism committee and the guides, as they were not happy with the way the money was being handled. The lack of investment in the community made them suspect the committee of corruption. This happened against the background of a general and persistent lack of trust in these matters by community members. The NCRC

intervened by stating that all support would be suspended until the committee and the guides were reinstated, which forced the youth to capitulate.

These events illustrate the vulnerability, dependency, and global–local power dynamics of the project—in the case of an impasse such as this, tourism would fail to run smoothly or at all, due to the lack of experience of the new people in the committee (who are normally trained by the NCRC before they take up their positions). This is what happens when the script is disrupted, and it is interesting to see how the NCRC reacted to these disruptions. For example, no actions were undertaken to address the youth's—and the larger community's—concerns, no research was carried out to uncover if there was any truth to the allegations of corruption, and the NCRC did not make any significant changes in the general management of the project. Priority was placed on getting things back to business as usual—business according to the ecotourism script—with little regard for the causes of the disruption. Thus, the fact that the youth had been unaccounted for within the structure of the project rendered it a major factor of uncertainty in terms of upholding the script. When looking at the actual causes of these disruptions, again one of the major contradictions of ecotourism becomes apparent: the benefits for the community are strongly emphasised in ecotourism rhetoric, while the actual results are quite meagre in practice. The example of Tafi-Atome shows that this can lead to tensions among people who were promised that ecotourism would bring certain benefits, be it employment or development, such as electricity and the like. Furthermore, these tensions were not eased by the NCRC, but rather covered up by the ecotourism script.

This analysis also shows the limitations of the script, especially when it comes to the contradictions inherent in ecotourism. Yet there are only very short intervals in which the limits of the script become obvious to all: villagers, tourists, and the NCRC. The script becomes a play within a bigger play, as it becomes integrated into the daily reality for villagers in Tafi-Atome and simultaneously affects the global communities of tourists, donors, and tourism organisations. Each of these organisations, in turn, has a role to play in keeping the situation "stable" so as to keep the commodity fiction alive and convincing. In Tafi-Atome, the script, however spurious, is for the most part maintained, as tourists do not stay long enough to start looking beyond it, while the villagers are restrained from breaking with the script in a definitive way, as the temporal nature and effects of the "uprisings" of the youth demonstrate.

Furthermore, the script makes an evaluation of the project challenging, as it is the reality according to how the script is played out that is evaluated, not any other reality that could be discerned beyond or through the script. What is certain is that the monkeys have thrived since the start of the project, since they now receive protection and have a larger area of forest to move around in. Less certain are the developments in the village, which are limited and unequally distributed because of the focus on the "native" spaces. The fact that this was not a main concern in the management of the project shows that in ecotourism things are often not what they seem to be (Duffy 2002; West and Carrier 2004) and that the ecotourism script is one of the main contributors to keeping it that

way. This is in line with recent findings by Cobbinah, Black, and Thwaites (2015), who found that in the Kakum Conservation Area—the most popular ecotourism destination in Ghana—community involvement and participation have generated mixed responses and experiences among the local residents, leading us to suggest that such a local diversification is of wider importance than only this case study.

CONCLUSION

To join in the contemporary growth of tourism in West Africa, Ghana aims to create attractions that can tap into the burgeoning tourism markets of sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, it must overcome a tricky marketing problem, namely how to set itself up as an attractive alternative to eastern and southern Africa while staying similar enough to these to tap into the same nature-oriented tourism market. It cannot stray too far from the general tourism image associated with "authentic Africa" as a whole, namely that of a continental wildlife reserve filled with wild, charismatic megafauna and open, "empty" landscapes (Büscher 2011). Hence, a crucial part of Ghana's tourism marketing, as this paper has shown, is its image of a "nature lover's delight" (Touring Ghana 2016): a country that—like the rest of Africa—holds plenty of wildlife and biodiversity and enables tourists to be in close proximity to exotic species, while enjoying authentic local cultures and stimulating their development at the same time. Of course, this sense of authenticity is continually "emerging".

This has helped Ghana to become a self-proclaimed "pioneer in the field of community-based ecotourism" and promoters and marketers have worked hard to make the industry conform to internationally accepted ideas of what this entails. These ideas—based on the ecotourism script—are underpinned by neoliberal market mechanisms, through which a win-win situation is created for both conservation and development. In this story, authentic rural communities become part of the global tourism imaginary, in which they are seen as effective agents to put ecotourism into practice at grassroots level. In this way, the ecotourism script also reveals important relations of power: it is primarily based on and influenced by Western values, ideologies, and interests, and the stakeholders who produce it are "influential and powerful, supranational organisations, Western donor agencies, INGOs, NGOs and industry alliances, often working in partnership which strengthens their influence yet further" (Cater 2006, 24).

However, we also see that this can be problematic. Through a case study of one of the many local ecotourism projects in Ghana, the Tafi-Atome monkey sanctuary, this analysis has shown that introducing ecotourism to such a locality is not as clear-cut as it may seem; to reinforce the ecotourism rhetoric that has become so prevalent in Ghana at the national and grassroots level, a certain script is necessary to ensure that the actors involved portray the desired image in the eyes of the outside world. It is in the limitations of this script, where it is not strong enough to "overlay" or indeed change local realities in the way intended, that the contradictions of ecotourism delivery become clear. The fact that these limitations are not recognised as such results in the persistence

of ecotourism rhetoric in its "pre-scripted" form and demonstrates how the script may encourage a lack of self-reflection on the part of many ecotourism stakeholders, including tour operators, donors, the government, NGOs, local proponents, and of course the ecotourists themselves, all of whom, in their own way, play a role in the planning and maintenance of ecotourism according to the ecotourism script.

We emphasise that our analysis of the ecotourism script is based on exploratory research, and that additional study is needed to further test, develop, and expand on the concept. In particular, further research concerning the performance of similar scripts in other contexts can help provide insights concerning the intricate linkages between ecotourism, conservation, and development, and their branding and marketing in the global political economy of ecotourism.

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