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RURAL DEVELOPMENT TOURISM: POVERTY UNPERCEIVED

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CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| Neglect and Significance | 1 |
| Rural Development Tourism Observed | 2 |
| Poverty Unobserved | 4 |
| (i) Spatial biases: urban, tarmac and roadside | 5 |
| (ii) Project bias | 6 |
| (iii) Biases of personal contact: elite, male, active, users, the present and the living | 7 |
| (iv) Dry season bias | 8 |
| (v) Biases of politeness and protocol | 9 |
| (vi) Synchronic bias | 9 |
| (vii) Professional beams | 10 |
| Tactics for Tourists | 11 |
| (i) Offsetting the anti-poverty biases | 12 |
| (ii) Spending longer | 12 |
| (iii) Being unimportant | 12 |
| (iv) Listening and learning | 12 |
| Conclusion | 13 |
| References | 14 |

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NEGLECT AND SIGNIFICANCE

Rural development tourism describes the brief rural visit by a professional from an urban centre. It is a widespread phenomenon, with perhaps tens of thousands of cases daily.(1) In spite of this, it has not to my knowledge been seriously analysed.(2) This is astonishing until one reflects on reasons. For academic analysis, it is too dispersed and ephemeral for easy rigour, not neatly in any disciplinary domain, and barely conceivable as a topic for a thesis. For practical professionals engaged in rural development it is perhaps too close to the nose to be in focus. It is moreover, polluted by shame and anecdote: memories of silly things one has done and prefers to hide, and stories for bar gossip rather than comparative study. Nor is self-critical introspection one of the more prominent activities among rural developers.

Yet rural development tourism is part of the systems of knowledge of non-rural people about rural conditions and life. It is set in a global system of knowledge and knowledge-generation, with cores and peripheries. In the rich, urban, industrialised, high status cores there is a mutual attraction and reinforcement of power, prestige, resources, professionals, and the capacity to generate knowledge. Both internationally, and within third world countries

(1) This may seem high. But if district headquarters alone are considered, let alone capital cities, provincial or regional headquarters, subdistrict headquarters, and other towns, and without including China, 100 countries with an average of 30 districts require only a little over 3 cases a day to make 10,000.

(2) But a one-day workshop on rural development tourism was held at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, on 10 March 1977. In writing this paper, I am glad to acknowledge a debt to the discussions of that workshop. References to any relevant sources will be appreciated.

centripetal forces draw educated people and resources in towards the cores and away from poor, rural, agricultural and low status peripheries. An urban trap sucks in professionals and holds them fast with better houses, services, schools and career prospects. Domestic and career cycles reinforce the flow: young, unmarried officials are sent to remote poor areas, but age, marriage, children, seniority and responsibility draw them in towards larger and larger urban and administrative centres; and academic researchers do their rural fieldwork when young and inexperienced, but once older and experienced, are similarly trapped in towns by family, teaching, and promotion. As people get older and more influential, so they move further from rural life and become busier; and whether in international agencies, national ministries or departments, or at subnational levels, the more they become involved in rural development at the policy level, the more likely it is that their only firsthand experience of rural conditions will be through brief rural visits. Further, the more influential, more important and busier they become, the more such visits are likely to be formally structured and selective. They have, of course, other sources of information; but it is through rural development tourism, if at all, that such 'core' people see and meet those who are 'peripheral'. Their brief rural visits can scarcely fail to play a key part in forming their impressions and beliefs and influencing their actions and decisions.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT TOURISM OBSERVED

The visit may be for one day or for several. The "tourists" or visitors may come from a foreign country, a capital city, a seat of regional or provincial government, a district headquarters, or some smaller urban place. Most commonly, they are government officials but they may also be technical specialists, academic researchers, voluntary agency staff, journalists, diplomats, politicians, consultants, or the staff of aid agencies. Differing in race, nationality, religion, profession, age, sex, language, interests, prejudices, conditioning and experience, they typically have four characteristics in common: a professional background; living and working in urban areas; wanting to find something out; and being short of time.

There are exceptions. There are government staff, technicians and researchers who live in rural areas and yet who tour. There are rural development tourists who want to avoid finding things out: officials who want to turn a blind eye to failures to achieve targets; diplomats who do not want to embarrass their hosts; politicians who do not want to hear people's protests. There are rural development tourists who are not in a hurry: in some more leisurely colonial days officials are believed to have taken their time on tour, though the memories of some may be tinged with nostalgia; and although vehicles now encourage speed and

-3-

haste, breakdowns intervene with sudden calm. But these are departures from the rule. Most rural development tourism is urban-based, data-seeking, and time-bound.

Rural development tourism has many purposes and many styles. Technical specialists concerned with physical resources may in practice have little contact with rural people, and there may be little formality about their visits. Others - administrators, politicians, policy-makers of various sorts - in contrast, may be involved in many meetings with people. It is with these latter sorts of visits, which have more influence on views of rural life, poverty and priorities, that this section is primarily concerned.

Caricature is tempting. Comparative anecdotes, themselves selected as good stories, could easily generate grotesque myths about brief visits. There are also major differences between cultures, environments, and individual tourists. All the same, and though coloured by selective memory and selected anecdote, one may ask how distorted the following sketch may be, stressing as it does what tends to go wrong or distort perception.

The visit is confused and confounded by the objectives of the actors. The rural people (who are variously indifferent, enthusiastic, amused or suspicious) try to see how penalties can be avoided and advantages gained. They conceal some things, pretend others, show yet others. Their fear, suspicion and distrust are well-founded. Those who are better off - headmen, chairmen of village committees, village accountants, junior government officials, progressive farmers, traders - are out to please. Unless there are frictions or factions, they show each other in a good light, reciprocating past favours from one another, and hoping for future ones. They entertain the visitor. According to ecology, economy and culture, goats, garlands, coconuts, coca cola, coffee, tea, or milk are offered and received with degrees of awkwardness, politeness and pleasure. The visitor is encapsulated, first in the Landrover or Jeep, and later in a moving entourage of officials and local notables. Some of the things the visitor most wants to find out are the things officials most want to conceal; and the local notables manoeuvre prudently between the two. There are tensions between the visitor's questions, the officials' desire to select what is seen, and the mixed motives of different rural people who have to live with the officials and each other after the visitor has left. As the afternoon heats up, frustration mounts and misunderstandings are magnified. In the end the visitor gives up and retires bemused to the circuit bungalow, the rest house, the guest house, the host official's residence, or an urban home or hotel. The village returns to normal. When dark falls and people talk more freely, the visitor is not there.

To rural people, the visit may be welcome or offensive; but prudence and politeness usually carry the day. Where they do not, hurry may prevent complaint. Refugees in a rural camp in Tanzania said of UN and government officials the "They come,

-4-

and sign the book, and they go", and "They only hold discussions with the buildings". Villagers' views of visitors are too rarely described. Villagers do not write books. Perhaps a dozen books have been written by outsiders about Tristan da Cunha, but the Tristanian who said (in 1955) that an islander should write a book about the outsiders who came to the island has not had his wish fulfilled. One may ponder the words of a villager in Senegal, reported in Adrian Adams' eloquent and humbling account of a village's experience of people coming from outside: "Ils ne savent pas qu'il y a ici des gens vivants"(1) (1978:23). Speed, superiority, and clear objectives prevent visitors from learning from villagers; they impose visitors' meanings on the "information" obtained. At its worst, rural development tourism becomes a primitive way of reinforcing prejudice, of being rapid and wrong.

Shortage of time compounds other difficulties. It is not just that the visit is planned to be brief; it is also often briefer than planned. Much can, and does, go wrong; and most contingencies mean less time. The visitor arrives late at the point of departure, delayed by a family crisis, sickness, an urgent meeting, a cable, a minister, a mechanical breakdown, or a hundred forms of accident, error or interruption. Or the visitor, having started out, is recalled by an urgent message. Or the driver (who usually takes the blame) does not know the way, or loses it. The route is impassable. The programme is too full and runs late. Wherever the visitor goes, people have been waiting; sometimes they have left and have to be recalled. There is time only for formalities: children sing, speeches are made, a building is admired, and the visitor is propelled onwards in a cloud of dust.(2) The more conscientious and perceptive the visitor and the more the visitor tries to break out of protocol, politeness and superficiality, the more the programme runs behind time and the greater the rush and superficiality later.

POVERTY UNOBSERVED

This sketch of rural development tourism stresses general problems and errors and has its own biases. But in relation to rural poverty, rural development tourism displays features which allow more secure generalisation. There are always exceptions; but there are powerful anti-poverty biases built into the nature of many brief rural visits. Some of these are obvious to the point of embarrassment. Together they are stronger than may be realised, distorting perception and hiding poverty.

(1) "They do not know that there are living people here".

(2) See dry season bias, below.

(i) Spatial biases: urban, tarmac and roadside

Most rural development tourism is by vehicle. Starting and ending in urban centres, it follows networks of roads. The hazards of dirt roads, the comfort of the tourist, the location of places for spending the night, the location of projects, and shortages alike of time and fuel, dictate a preference for tarmac roads and for travel close to the urban centre.

Fuel shortages and costs deserve attention. Whenever governments make budget cuts, the travel vote is a favourite. It can be cut without visible loss. But each cut makes rural contact harder, and urban and tarmac bias more pronounced. When fuel costs rise dramatically, as they have done in past years, the effect may be marked, especially in those poor countries without oil and short of foreign exchange. Rural visits, research, and projects shrink back from more distant, poorer, areas to those which are closer, more prosperous, and cheaper to visit. An early example was Zambia's fuel shortage following Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 and which led to fuel rationing: one effect was that the Universities of Nottingham and Zambia joint research project concerned with the productivity of agricultural labour was restricted to work in two areas instead of three, and these were areas which were relatively well-developed agriculturally, having had large inputs of education, extension and communication (Elliott 1970:648). More recently, district agricultural officers in Bangladesh have been prohibited from using their vehicles outside the urban centres in which they are stationed. Every rise in oil prices both impoverishes the remoter, poorer people, tilting the urban-rural terms of trade against them more sharply, and at the same time reduces the chances that their deprivation will be known. In contrast, visits, attention and projects will concentrate more in peri-urban areas which are relatively prosperous by virtue of being close to towns or cities.

Travel on good roads also biases impressions and contacts against those who are poorer. For part of Western Kenya, Joseph Ssenyonga has described what he calls an "elite roadside ecology" (1976:9). As services are provided along the roadside - improved tarmac surface for the road, buses, electricity, telephone, piped water supply - so those who are better-off buy up roadside plots and build on them. The poorer people shift away out of sight. The visitor then sees the better-off people and their houses and gardens, and not the poorer people and theirs. Ribbon development along roadsides gives a false impression in many countries. The better the roads, and the higher the traffic, the more pronounced is the roadside development and the more likely the visitor is to see it and be misled. Other developments are also placed near main roads. In Tamil Nadu, for example, agricultural demonstrations of new seeds and fertilisers were sited beside main roads so that they would be easy to inspect. Factories, offices, shops, markets, and even research projects, are often the same.

Nor does roadside bias apply only to main roads. Within

or streets and the places where people meet. M. P. Moore and G. Wickremesinghe, reporting on a study of three villages in the Low Country of Sri Lanka, have this to say on "hidden poverty":

"In retrospect at least, one of the most obvious aspects of poverty in the study villages is the extent to which it is concealed from view ... one could drive along all the motorable roads in the villages and see scarcely a single 'poor' house. Here, as in most of rural Sri Lanka, wealthier households use their social and economic power to obtain roadside homestead sites. ... To even see the houses of the poor one often has to leave the road. Many visitors, including public officers, appear not to do so very often." (Forthcoming: 98)

(ii) Project bias

Rural development tourists link in with networks of urban-rural contacts. Their programmes are pointed to those rural places where something is happening - where money is being spent, staff are stationed, a project is in hand. Ministries, departments, district staff, and voluntary agencies all pay special attention to projects, and channel visitors towards them. Contact and learning are then with tiny atypical islands of activity which attract repeated and mutually reinforcing attention.

Project bias is most marked with the showpiece: the nicely groomed, pet project, specially staffed and supported, with well-briefed members who know what to say, a decent but not excessive distance from the urban headquarters. Governments in capital cities need such projects for foreign visitors; district staff and subdistrict staff need them too for visits by their senior officers. Such projects provide a quick and simple reflex to solve the problem of what to do with visitors or senior staff on inspection. But they direct attention, once again, away from the rural poor.

The better known cases are those rural development projects which have attracted international attention. Any role of honour would include the Anand Dairy Cooperatives in India; the Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit in Ethiopia; the Comilla Project in Bangladesh; the Gezira Scheme in Sudan; Lilongwe in Malawi; the Muda Irrigation Project in Malaysia; the Mwea Irrigation Settlement in Kenya; and the Puebla Project in Mexico. All these have been much visited, studied, evaluated and written and published about. Students seeking Ph.Ds read about them and want to do their fieldwork on them. Visitors ask to see them. And managers have devoted much time to showing visitors around.

Fame forces such project managers into public relations. Flooded with the celebrated, curious and ignorant - prime ministers, graduate students, women's groups, farmers' groups, aid missions, school parties, committees and directors of this and that - the management sets up a public relations unit and

develops a public relations style. Visitors get the treatment. A fluent guide follows a standard route and a standard routine. The same people are met, the same buildings entered, the same books signed, the same polite praise inscribed in the book against the visitor's name. Questions are drowned in statistics; doubts inhibited by handouts. Inquisitive visitors leave loaded with research papers, technical evaluations, and annual reports which they will never read. What they do carry with them are selective impressions of some of those who are better-off in the special project, the charismatic imprint of the outstanding leader who has created it, and a sense of guilt at the unworthy scepticism which prompted probing questions. For their part, the project staff have reinforced through repetition the beliefs which sustain their morale. Thus projects take off into self-sustaining myth.

(iii) Biases of personal contact: elite, male, active, users, the present and the living.

a. Elite bias. In short rural visits, contact and sources of information are biased towards those who are better off and more powerful. They are the most fluent informants. It is they who receive and speak to the visitor; they who articulate "the village's" interests and wishes; their concerns which emerge as the village's priorities for development. It is they who entertain visitors, generously providing the goat for slaughter or the coconuts to drink. It is they who show progressive practices in their fields. It is they who monopolise the visitor's time and attention.

Conversely, the poor do not speak up. They may even decline to sit down with those of higher status. Weak, powerless and isolated, they are often reluctant to push themselves forward. In Paul Devitt's words:

"The poor are often inconspicuous, inarticulate and unorganised. Their voices may not be heard at public meetings in communities where it is customary for only the big men to put their views. It is rare to find a body or institution that adequately represents the poor in a certain community or area. Outsiders and government officials invariably find it more profitable and congenial to converse with local influentials than with the uncommunicative poor." (1977:23)

The poor are a residual, the last in the line, the most difficult to find, and the hardest to learn from. "Unless paupers and poverty are deliberately and persistently sought, they tend to remain effectively screened from outside inquirers." (Ibid:24)

b. Male bias. Most rural development tourists are men. Most government staff in rural areas are men. Most rural people with whom contact is established on brief rural visits are men. In most societies women have inferior status and are subordinate to men. There are variations and exceptions;

but quite often women are shy to speak to visitors, especially men. And yet poor rural women are a poor and deprived class within a class. Rural single women, women heads of households, and widows, include many of the most wretched and unseen people in the world.

c. Active and user biases. The active are more likely to be encountered than the inactive, and users of services than non-users. School children are more likely to be met than those children who are not in school; those who use the health clinic than those who are too sick, too poor, or too distant to do so; those who come to market because they have goods to sell or money with which to buy, than those who stay at home because they have neither; members of the cooperative (and especially the committee who get the biggest loans), not those who are too poor to join it; the fit in the fields rather than the sick or starving hidden in the huts or houses at home; (1) those who have innovated rather than those who have not. Inactive old people are especially unseen: Colin Turnbull has recorded that he spent some time camping outside a village before he realised that old people were starving (1973:102).

d. Present and living biases. Those who are absent or dead cannot be met. But those who have migrated in desperation and those who have died may include many of those who have been most deprived. Much of the worst poverty is hidden by its removal.

(iv) Dry season Bias.

Most of the poor rural people in the world live in areas of marked wet-dry seasonality, most of it tropical. For the great majority whose livelihoods depend on cultivation (as opposed to pastoralism) the most difficult time of year is usually the wet season, especially before the first harvest. Food is short, food prices high, work hard, and infections prevalent. Malnutrition, morbidity and mortality all rise; body weights decline. The poorer people, women and children are particularly vulnerable. Birth weights drop and neonatal mortality rises. Child care is poor. Desperate people get indebted. This is both the hungry season and the sick season. It is also the season of ratchets, of irreversible downwards movements into poverty through the sale or mortgaging of assets, the time when poor people are most likely to become poorer. (2)

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- (1) This will not always be true, especially with village-biased visits by those concerned with health and nutrition.
- (2) For the statements in this paragraph, see the papers of the conference on seasonal dimensions to rural poverty summarised in Chambers *et al.* 1979, and further examined in Longhurst and Payne 1979 and Chambers (forthcoming).

It is also the unseen season. Rural visits by urban-based professionals have their own seasonality. There are some - agriculturalists and epidemiologists - who for professional reasons may make a point of rural travel during the rains; for that is when crops grow and bugs and bacteria breed. But the disincentives are strong. The rains are a bad time for rural travel because of floods, mud, broken bridges, getting stuck, damaging vehicles, losing time, and enduring discomfort. In some places roads are officially closed. In the South Sudan there is a period of about two months after the onset of the rains when roads are impassable but when there is not yet enough water in the rivers for travel by boat. Many rural areas, especially and precisely those which are remote and poor, are quite simply inaccessible by vehicle during the rains. The worst times of year for the poorer people are then those least seen by urban-based outsiders.

But once the rains are over they can travel more freely. It is in the dry season, when disease is diminishing, the harvest in, food stocks adequate, body weights rising, ceremonies in full swing, and people at their least deprived, that there is most contact between urban-based professionals and the rural poor. Not just rural development tourism, but rapid rural appraisal generally is liable to a dry season bias. (1) The poorest people are most seen at precisely the times when they are least deprived.

(v) Biases of politeness and protocol.

Poverty in any country may be a source variously of indifference or shame. The rural development tourist may sense that the notables who generously offer hospitality may not welcome searching questions about the poorer people. Senior officials visiting junior officials may not wish to expose or examine failures of programmes to benefit the poor. Common courtesy towards hosts may deter the tourist from the awkward question, the walk into the poorer quarter of the village, the discussion with the landless women heads of households. While it is by no means universal, politeness and protocol often discourage contact with the poor.

(vi) Synchronic bias

Rural development tourists see a moment in time. Their perceptions are conditioned by what is visible at that moment. They have a snapshot, not a moving picture. Trends are difficult to identify. And yet with rural poverty, trends are critical. Is the fertility of the soil being augmented or declining? Is the water table rising or falling? Are the

(1) A recent manual for assessing rural needs, warning about the unexpected in rural surveys, says "Once, the jeeps needed for transporting the interviewers were recalled for a month during the few precious months of the dry season" (Ashe 1979:26, my underlining).

proportions and numbers of the landless increasing or decreasing? Is the incidence of deaths of infants from diarrhoea going up or down? Are real wages rising or falling over the years? Is the distribution of landholdings becoming more or less skew? How fast is the population increasing? Questions like these are difficult to tackle on short rural visits. They rely heavily on time series data, either from surveys (which may never have been carried out), or in the memories of rural people, which take time, care and sensitive questioning to tap. Rapid rural development tourism does not easily permit an appraisal of trends in poverty.

(vii) Professional beams.

Rural poverty is sustained and deepened by many interlocking forces. Some of these are excluded from the sight of the rural development tourist by their very nature, especially those which are international, and those which concern social relationships and processes. But beyond this, no professional is likely to recognise all the linked aspects of poverty. Lack of assets, inadequate income and food, physical weakness and sickness, vulnerability to disaster, exploitation and powerlessness, are together parts of a larger syndrome. But professional training conditions otherwise intelligent people to look for and see fewer things. Professionals have been programmed by their education and experience to examine what shows up in a bright and slender beam which blinds them to what lies outside it. As rural development tourists, knowing what they want to know and short of time, professionals are even more narrowly single-minded. They do their own thing and only their own thing. They look for and find what fits their paradigms. There is no time for the open-ended question. "He that seeketh, findeth". Visiting the same village, a hydrologist enquires about the water table, a pedologist examines the soils, an agronomist investigates fertility and yields, a plant pathologist looks for plant diseases, an economist asks about wages and prices, a sociologist looks into patron-client relations, an administrator examines the tax collection record, a doctor investigates hygiene and health, and a nutritionist studies villagers' diets. Some may be sensitive to the holism of poverty. But none is likely to be able to fit together all, or even most, of the negative factors as they affect the poorer people. Subject also to synchronic bias, they may not identify trends: but even if they do, they may see only those, which are their own disciplinary concern. A rural area which is on a disaster course may never be recognised. The hydrologist may see the wells going dry but not the malnutrition; the doctor may see the diarrhoeas but not the declining real wages. The rural poor themselves may have a superior insight into the linkages and into trends; but the urgency and specialisation of rural development tourism militates against this ever being made available to the visiting professional.

This is not a complete list of biases against the poor. There are others: towards whatever is thought modern as opposed to primitive; towards buildings and structures rather than people; towards the head reaches of irrigation systems rather than the tail reaches towards physically pleasant environments as against

unpleasant; towards what is clean as against what is dirty; and at the international level, relative to population, towards countries which are smaller rather than larger, despite the far higher numbers of poor rural people in the larger countries. And the list can no doubt be extended.

The point that matters is, however, not how many biases can be identified; but rather the extent to which they are mutually reinforcing. The prosperity after harvest of a male farmer on a project beside a main road close to a capital city may colour the perceptions of a succession of influential officials and dignitaries. The plight of a poor widow starving and sick in the wet season in a remote and inaccessible area may never in any way impinge on the consciousness of anyone outside her own community, and not all of them. The biases interlock; rural development tourism is pulled powerfully towards those who are better off, and away from those who are poorer and more deprived.

TACTICS FOR TOURISTS

The discussion so far has been negative, itself a bias. But the point is not to destroy or prevent rural development tourism, but accepting it as necessary, inevitable and widespread, to improve it. Readers reflecting on their own experiences and techniques will have been noting how often and how well they have avoided or broken away from the forces described. It is encouraging to remember the example of Wolf Ladejinsky. (1) A man of wide experience, he carried out two brief field trips in India in 1969, at the age of 70, and wrote them up in the Economic and Political Weekly (Ladejinsky 1969a and b). He visited the Punjab and the Kosi area in Bihar. His methods were mixed, and he used surveys and official statistics as well as tourism. He had the skill and experience to see through, as early as this, to the ironies and ills of the green revolution: "The new agricultural policy which has generated growth and prosperity is also the indirect cause of the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor" (1969a:13). What others years later plodded to document to two decimal places, he rumbled convincingly in a week or two, exposing, decisively and without delay, the major trends and implications.

For lesser mortals, such heights may be out of reach. But for rural visits concerned with poverty there are tactics which help. If these are obvious, once stated, to the point of banality, I can only say that it is remarkable how often they are ignored, not least by myself. They are:

(1) I am grateful to Edward Clay for drawing my attention to this example.

(i) Offsetting the anti-poverty biases. Urban, tarmac and roadside biases can be countered by going further afield and walking away from roads; project bias by visiting not only projects but other areas near them, or by non-scheduled stops; biases of personal contact by deliberately seeking out the poorer people, by making a point of meeting women, by taking time to seek out those who are sick at home and not at the clinic or in the fields, by asking about those who have left or who have died; dry season bias by visiting during the rains, or at least by asking about the worst times of the year; the biases of politeness and protocol by breaking away after the courtesies and making it clear what is sought; synchronic bias by seeking time series data and asking people about changes over time; professional beams by seeking through introspection to see the limitations imposed by professional conditioning, by trying to widen spans of perception, and by asking open-ended questions.

(ii) Spending longer. In many ways the poorer people are at the end of the line. They take the longest to reach; they are the last to speak; they are the least organised, the least articulate and the most fearful. They often keep a low profile. Some are migrants. In any visit that is rushed, they are the people least likely to be encountered. It is after the courtesies, after the planned visits, after the tourist has ceased to be a novelty, that contact becomes easier. As we have seen, rural development tourism is vulnerable to a host of delays and disasters which reduce the time available. The serious "poverty watcher", to use Mick Moore's phrase (1979), must allow plenty of time in one place. It helps to spend the night, to talk after dark, unhurriedly, and to eat together if it can be done unexploitatively.

(iii) Being unimportant. The cavalcade of cars, the clouds of dust, the reception committee and the protracted speeches of the VIP's visit generate well-known problems. By contrast, the visitor who comes simply, by bicycle or on foot, fits more easily and disturbs and distracts less. Unscheduled visits, walking and asking about things that are seen, planning not to have a special programme, and avoiding the impression of having influence over benefits which a community might receive, all reduce the dangers of special or misleading responses and impressions.

(iv) Listening and learning. If the tourist believes that there is nothing to learn from rural people, much is lost before starting. A reversal of roles, with the outsider as pupil, listening and learning, is needed if indigenous knowledge is to be revealed. Closed questions impose meanings; open-ended questions and discussions lead into areas the visitor did not know to ask about. There is much to be discovered about what rural people know, but arrogance and status all too often prevent professionals from learning.

CONCLUSION

The last tactic for tourists goes beyond this paper. Sensitive rural development tourism is a form of rapid rural appraisal (RRA). But RRA can be taken much further, in developing methods which are quick-and-clean - that is, quick and cost-effective in the trade-offs between quantity, accuracy, relevance, timeliness and actual use of information. Offsetting biases, spending longer, being unimportant, and listening and learning - these can take intelligent tactical tourists further than some might wish to recognise. The inspired and experienced individual may go even further. But Ladejinskys do not grow on trees. The challenge to ingenuity now is to discover and develop approaches which do not depend on Ladejinskys, methods for rural appraisal and for appraising and understanding poverty which are not only cost-effective but widely replicable. Those methods may kick against the pricks of professional purity and scholastic conservatism. If so, the rural poor deserve that we kick hard and well.

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