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'Reality Tours' to Chiapas, Mexico:
The Role of Justice Tourism in Development

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Elena Wrelton

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the role of justice tourism as a form of tourism and as a form of activism. It contains the results of research carried out in Chiapas, Mexico on a Reality Tour organised by San Francisco-based human rights organisation, Global Exchange. The research investigated the views and experiences of the three main parties involved in the tour, Global Exchange, the tour participants and the host NGOs.

In acknowledging that the aims of the parties involved go beyond that of tourism development, it uses the concepts of empowerment, the role of NGOs and social movements to assess the tour's usefulness in the context of both alternative and post development. In doing so it suggests that although the practice of the Reality Tours is set within alternative development and that the tours are able to support alternative development initiatives, it also presents a way Northern NGOs can support post development processes that are occurring in Third World countries.

The research was designed to firstly assess the impact of the tour as a form of tourism. Through comparison to the tourism literature it concluded that it is a form of alternative tourism with a high level of measures taken to ensure social responsibility in its operation. Unlike the majority of forms of tourism it is not intended to contribute to the development of an industry. Secondly the research was designed to assess the tours usefulness as a method of education and tool for activism. With regards to activism the research highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the Reality Tours as a method of stimulating action. It concludes that the experiences gained during the tour are particularly useful in supporting certain forms of action that are both diverse and closely aligned with the participants existing interests.
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| CIDESI       | *Centro Indígena de Capacitación Integral*  
Indigenous Centre for Integral Training |
| CIEPAC       | *Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria,*  
Center for Economic and Political Research for Community Action |
| EZLN         | *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*  
Zapatista National Liberation Army |
| Fray Bart    | *Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas*  
Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Centre |
| GX           | Global Exchange |
| NGO          | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| PRI          | *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*  
Institutional Revolutionary Party |
| UNDR         | United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights |