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GEOGRAPHIES OF TOURISM AND PLACE IN MICRONESIA:
THE 'SLEEPING LADY' AWAKES

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**Geographies of tourism and place in Micronesia:
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Greg Ringer

Abstract

Tourism has grown to become the dominant service industry in the world in the 21st Century and a common prescription for funding sustainable community development throughout the East Asia-Pacific region. Certainly, there can be no denial of tourism's potential to provide meaningful economic alternatives for indigenous residents. However, the marketing of rural communities and island nations as tourist attractions may also transfigure the dynamic historically and socially - constructed landscapes of the destination through the reformation of local identities and cultural patterns of behaviour. To encourage a proactive approach to tourism, planning needs to be sensitive to the social morphology of the destination community and the intersect with tourist activities. To encourage such a proactive approach, this paper adopts a geographic perspective in examining the qualitative effects of ecotourism on the Micronesian island of Kosrae as it moves from a subsistence-based, conservative, patriarchal society to a tourism destination in the global economy. In the process, the cognitive perceptions and practised lifestyles of residents and visitors and the recreational space of the destination is distinguished from the inhabited place of local people. As a consequence, tourism's function as agent and process in mediating the social structure, meaning, and cohesion of Kosraean culture is clarified.

As a result of the consistent growth in international travel, reputedly the world's largest service industry, tourism has increasingly been seen as a viable alternative for economic development and environmental conservation, as well as a means of legitimising political control over rural areas. Although growth slowed temporarily during the 1997 global economic crisis and again, even more dramatically, in the months following the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. in September 2001 and the SARS outbreak in East Asia in 2003, the potential of domestic and international tourism is still considerable, and tourism continues to offer destination communities numerous social and economic options (Ringer, 1998: 1-10).

While intraregional and domestic travel remain depressed, as many Asian travellers continue to curtail their discretionary spending on recreational activities, by the late 1990s, international travel was clearly rebounding worldwide. Compared with the previous year, tourist arrivals in 1998 grew from 2.5 per cent to 635 million, while tourism receipts (excluding international transport) increased to US\$ 439 billion (WTO, 1999: 1). This growth is attributed mainly to the increasing popularity of nature- and culture-based tourism, and by 1998 some 110 million international visitors were going to the developing economies of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, which collectively reported a travel surplus of more than US\$ 63 billion in 1998 (WTO, 2001: 6).

The Pacific islands of Micronesia attract some 1.5 million visitors annually (0.2% of all international arrivals), of whom the majority come from Japan, Australia and the USA. At the time of writing, most go to Guam or Belau, formerly Palau, where tourist infrastructures are highly developed and which have established links with Japan and Australia. However, the island State of Kosrae, in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) (figure 1), is slowly growing in popularity, and now ranks third in the FSM in arrivals, with approximately 3,000 visitors a year. Most come from either the USA (60%) or Japan (25%), and nearly all are attracted by the biodiversity of the marine environment immediately offshore. Compared to other destinations in the East Asia–Pacific region, the number of international visitors appears insignificant (table 1), but their impact is disproportionately high



Figure 1. Location of Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia.

because of the island's small size and relative isolation, as well as the traditional nature of Kosraean culture and the rapid growth in visitor numbers within only a few years.

Tourism undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to many Pacific economies, as indicated by the profusion of visitor-subsidised projects throughout Micronesia. At the same time, tourism's role in the commodification of local cultures and the marketing of traditional practices and places as ecotourist venues also demands attention. While the appeal of islands like Kosrae is certainly not unique in or to the Pacific region, tourism's impacts - social, economic, ecological, political, and technological influences - can jeopardise local cultures and ecosystems that are geographically isolated and unprepared in terms of services and human resources (Hawkins, 1994: 261-5; Hall, 1993; Howe, McMahon & Propst, 1997).

More specifically, the pressures of tourism development on fragile island environments, antiquated and unreliable water catchment systems, and relatively small landmasses contribute to overpopulation and competing pressures between agriculture and urbanisation, as well as conflicts between traditional practices and beliefs and those arising from globalisation. In this context, tourism has resulted in the displacement of lower income residents, forced to confront accelerating costs with minimum wage employment as local communities switch from subsistence and barter-based to cash economies. But these and other social issues remain buried in the economic jargon of job 'mobility'

and capital 'relocation,' highlighted in texts produced by Kosraean economic development officials (Asian Development Bank, 1996: 119; FSM Department of Economic Affairs, 2000: 13).

In fact, their continued focus on tourism's economic benefits distracts attention from 'possibly the biggest issue tourism [faces] . . . and its most serious restraint, . . . its potentially-damaging impact on the people and places visited' (PATA 1992: 3). Yet, the support and hospitality of the resident population may ultimately determine whether or not tourism thrives. Thus, this constitutes a challenge of some consequence (Rapaport, 1992: 114-6; Ringer, 1992: 3-5; Valentine, 1993: 111-43; Wight, 1993: 5-6; Whelan, 1991; Vellas & Bécherel, 1995).

Personal observation and other anecdotal evidence shared by Kosraean residents with the author make clear the influential role of tourism in the lives of the Kosraean people, mediating the formation of local identities and cultural patterns of behaviour and communication through the parameters of its development. At the same time, the socially constructed geographies and expectations of residents are frequently marginalised in the plans and aspirations of visitors and developers (Otte, 1999: 1-3; Anderson & Gale 1992; Shaw & Williams 1994; Ringer, 1998; Theobald, 1998).

This paper, therefore, utilises perspectives from human geography and leisure studies to identify the cognitive landscapes of Kosraeans and visitors to Kosrae. By focusing on the experiential and functional meaning of selected sites, it is possible to analyse the correlation between tourist behaviour and the images presented in brochures, on the Internet and in the media, and to contrast them with the established places of community members, whose geographies are shaped and reinforced by practice, gender and philosophy. It is hoped that, in the process of this examination, the task of managing the development of such a destination area through education and information may be clarified and facilitated.

Background

Kosrae is a member of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), a chain of 607 small islands located approximately 4,000 km southwest of Hawai'i, or three quarters of the way between Hawai'i and Southeast Asia, and 800 km north of the equator. The easternmost of the four federated states,

which also include Yap, Chuuk (Truk), and Pohnpei, (the administrative capital), Kosrae is the second largest island in the group, and the only state without outer islands or atolls. Surrounded by a relatively intact fringing reef system and mangrove forests, the island has an interior that is rugged and heavily dissected by erosion from the prevailing rains, and the verdant, tropical jungle is virtually inaccessible without local guides. A deep valley between two mountain ridges divides the island in half and creates the image known to Kosraeans as the 'Sleeping Lady.' The island's residents live in the five coastal villages of Tafunisak, Lelu, Malem, Utwa and Walung and, more recently, in the administrative and commercial centre, Tofol.

Considered one of the more culturally conservative communities in Micronesia, Kosraeans are now living through a time of accelerated social change. In the early 1990s, as a result of the exponential birthrate since World War II, the island's population surpassed 7,100, the highest it has ever been. The increase represents a remarkable recovery from the near extinction of Kosraean culture in 1880, when diseases introduced by visiting US whalers had reduced the population to less than three hundred. However, such population growth has created a situation with considerable implications for sustainable growth and conservation of the island's natural resources. Perhaps most significantly, nearly 80 per cent of the residents are under fifteen years of age - nearly double the FSM average of 46% for that age group (Segal 1989: 362; Gorenflo 1993: 72-89; FSM National Census Bureau, 1995: 1-4).

Although, at the time of writing, less than 5% of the island's 11,200 hectares have been developed, land is rapidly being cleared for housing, agriculture and new tourism facilities. At the same time, jet travel and international tourism are now loosening neotraditional cultural restrictions in dress and behaviour, though the sexes remain segregated in church, and cooking and recreation are banned on Sundays (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1999: 3; Bank of Hawai'i, 2000: 5-7; FSM Information Service, 2001: 3).

These restrictions reflect the devout Christianity of Kosraeans. Nearly 95% of the population is fundamentalist Congregationalist, the result of intense missionary activity in the nineteenth century that regenerated the Kosraean populace while eradicating most vestiges of traditional culture. Along with religion, community roles have traditionally been defined by family affiliation, the village of

residency, and gender. In general, men work primarily in woodworking and subsistence agriculture, while women fish, catch mangrove crabs, or weave a variety of products (including mats, baskets, and clothing) for local use or purchase by visitors (Segal, 1989: 90-124; Leibowitz, 1989).

Tourism and economic development

Aside from subsistence farming and fishing, two thirds of the population find jobs in government employment. This largesse is provided by the U.S. government, which contributes more than US\$ 40 million a year to fund Kosrae's increasingly cash-consumptive economy. Since 1986, the USA has pledged a total of more than US\$ 1.3 billion, primarily as rent through the Compact of Free Association for exclusive access to the Federation's waterways through 2001. The State government has long wanted to reduce its dependence on the USA but - except for high grade phosphate and selected tuna stocks - FSM lacks natural resources. As a consequence, in 1992 it started to promote Kosrae as a marine ecotourism destination for 'tourists with a variety of independent motives [who sought] authentic Pacific island settings with modern tourist facilities that are both safe and friendly to the environment' (Bank of Hawai'i, 2000: 17). The government also enacted the first comprehensive plan in the FSM to protect the island's coastal marine resources. Though the efforts remain ill-defined, the intent of both programmes was to capitalise on the island's aquatic environment and local culture, and to bring direct benefits to residents while simultaneously furthering conservation programmes (Phillips, 1993: 5-22; FSM Information Service, 2001: 1-2).

Many Kosraeans, in both the private and public sectors, consider the phenomenal growth of global tourism solid proof of its enormous potential for local development. Such advocates note that annual tourist arrivals to the FSM have tripled since 1984 (though this represents still less than 5% of the total visiting Guam) and point to the mini-boom evident during the 1990s in the construction of new facilities, often subsidised by ecotour dollars from increasing numbers of visitors. Among such projects is an airport constructed to international standards, with (at the time of writing) weekly services to Hawai'i and Guam. Proponents also note the potential for diving and other niche tourism markets in East Asia and the Pacific.

However, the islanders' understanding of tourism's importance is limited by the fact that less than 10% of the population had ever left the island until the 'post-Compact' exodus of the late 1990s, and their exposure to tourism elsewhere remains primarily through videotaped images and stories. This lack of direct experience of travel and tourism is changing dramatically, though, as increasing numbers of young adults now attend universities in Guam and the USA, while others migrate to work in Guam, Hawai'i and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Nevertheless, the physical size and geographical isolation of Kosrae, with limited air connections to major markets, increased inter-island competition, and inadequate facilities, hinder the island's long-term development of tourism. Some consider a further blockage to development to be FSM's status as a quasi colony of the United States, which was ceded military and political control under the Compact approved by the United Nations Security Council in November, 1986 (Segal 1989: 290-304; U.S. Department of the Interior, 1998: FSM Information Service, 1999: 61).

The issue of development is further clouded by the apparent lack of community consensus over tourism, and some islanders are increasingly resistant to the importation of 'unwanted social and cultural side-effects as a result of the rapid growth of the [tourism] industry' seen in other Pacific island destinations (Fletcher & Snee, 1989: 115). Village leaders, for example, have protested against plans for a Japanese-funded golf course on private property between Malem and Utwa, and religious officials frequently complain that international visitors ignore cultural taboos on recreational activities on Sundays (Development Associates, 1999: 3).

Nonetheless, tourism certainly has the potential to be a major industry on Kosrae and 'offers one of the few viable alternatives for small island states struggling to achieve a degree of economic independence' (Milne, 1990: 16). The central challenge for local residents and tourism planners on Kosrae - and in communities throughout the Pacific - is to identify activities and attractions that appeal to ecotourists interested in the physical and human environments of Micronesia and, at the same time, to provide meaningful support and direct benefit to community residents, while minimising 'the influence foreigners will have on FSM's economy and culture' (Bank of Hawai'i; 2000: 17).

Objectives

While recent critiques in leisure studies focus on tourists and the travel industry as agents of social change, several critical themes remain under-appreciated, including the commercialization of local sites and cultures, the marginalisation of 'host' communities, and the production and privatisation of tourist landscapes and services. As a result, the meaning and value of daily practices and social behaviour that defines a group of people and their place are too casually removed from the planning matrix with a rhetorical razor that effectively disempowers community authority and disenfranchises residents. To encourage a more constructive approach, this study employs cognitive mapping to elucidate graphically tourism's influence on the structure, identity and meaning of Kosrae for tourists and local people, as residents and their island become further embedded in the global tourism economy (Urry, 1990; Cater & Lowman, 1994; Rojek, 1994; Howe, McMahon & Propst 1997; Lindberg, Wood & Engeldrum, 1998; McLaren, 1998; Ringer, 1998; Bosselman, Peterson & McCarthy, 1999; Singh & Singh, 1999).

The island's marine and cultural environments are the means by which Kosrae will achieve international tourism recognition. However, the distinctive, socially constructed landscape of local people, and the knowledge contained therein, are too frequently obscured by the industry-constructed image of the tourist environment and, with it, the stories of the human community, nature, and the history of both. These metaphors of situation and function are crucial, though, in articulating the relationship that people establish with one another and the local environment. They reveal distinctive social values that form the basis of community narratives and institutional practices, and have historically served to moderate social and political change and tension in Micronesia (Bank of Hawai'i, 2000: 7-8).

The traditional landscape of Kosrae is a source of attraction for visitors. Nevertheless, if Kosrae is to succeed in developing forms of tourism that are supportive (of local objectives), sensitive (to cultural and biological limitations) and sustainable (socially and ecologically), a more critical understanding of the qualitative and emotional effects of tourism activities on the destination community is warranted. Such effects include revisions in the discourse, function and communication of local features as symbols of identity and interaction. Through the insertion of individual

perceptions of visitors and residents in the process, graphic evidence of existing social behaviour, community identities, and associated landscape values is displayed for consideration by decision-makers, and provides a baseline against which future cognitive change can be documented.

Methodology

Anxious to preserve a cultural 'sense of place' while facilitating the expansion of tourism, the Kosrae State Division of Tourism initiated a community-based assessment in 1992, to balance recreational needs with respect for cultural traditions and practices. As one component of the project, in 1998 a limited study was undertaken of residents and visitors regarding their activities, perceptions, and attitudes about ecotourism on Kosrae. Through a composite image, selected community sites could then be identified for special management and their boundaries more effectively established and monitored before significant alteration occurred.

To identify the location and range of attractions and practices in which both groups engaged, 45 residents and 20 visitors (age 15+ years) were randomly selected from arriving passengers at Kosrae International Airport, and from individuals who called at the Kosrae Tourism Office in Tofol. They were asked a series of questions designed to obtain demographic and market data, and requested to participate in a cognitive mapping exercise in which they identified physical sites according to their perceived function as 1) a path or route of transport, 2) a landmark, 3) an activity centre or setting of social interaction, 4) a neighbourhood perceived to contain some sense of community, and 5) a boundary or edge, whether physical or perceptual. While the total number of participants may be considered statistically insignificant (less than 1% of the island's population and visitor population was surveyed), it was deemed sufficient to establish the usefulness of perceptual mapping as a planning tool in the local environment.

Micronesians have long used cognitive images to construct sea-charts with stick grids, depicting prevailing wave patterns and winds, to navigate across vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean (an aptitude clearly retained by older Kosraeans, at least, who can traverse long distances on land and water without obvious physical landmarks). The knowledge of maps is also evident in their stories

and architecture, and the way Micronesians weave information of distance and location into their daily lives (Farrell, 1984: 18f).

The selected research methods, then, were intended to distinguish the behaviour of residents, who typically exhibit greater awareness and appreciation of local environmental features and the history of the landscape, from that of the visitors, whose narrower range of these place experiences is reflected in their emphasis on landmarks and tourist-related activity centres (Lynch 1960). The distinction was considered particularly important in the selection and regulation of locally described 'sacred sites' for both tourism and local purposes, since the

existence of a response to landscape, the importance of the physical features of the landscape to that response, and the constancy of the response are fundamental to any attempt to [effectively] manage visual resources (Evernden 1981: 148).

For this reason, the survey questionnaires included explanations of the various current and proposed development activities designed 1) to assist community members to appreciate ecotourism's benefits and shortfalls, both economically and ecologically; and 2) to encourage local involvement in assessing and monitoring ecotourism by recognising and building upon traditional social structures and land tenure arrangements.

Tourist geographies

It is not surprising, perhaps, to find that the dominant images held by tourists of the Kosraean landscape involve the physical features depicted in travel publications, an indication that most are initially drawn to – and actively seek out – represented sites of Kosrae's scenic marine environment and jungle-covered mountains. As a result, the spatial boundaries of the visitors' social experience are (predictably) delineated by the focal points at which tourists congregate: the government offices in Tofol, hotels and dive facilities along the coast road from Tafunsak, and the small boat marina in Utwa, where tourists board outrigger canoes for rides through the saltwater mangrove forests (figure 2).

Absent from most visitor maps is any awareness of the hinterlands of the island, other than views from the tourism office or airport. Nor is there any evidence in many of the maps of the

cultural landscape, including the five villages around the island and the people who dwell in them. Certainly, those who stated that ‘ecotourism’ or ‘adventure tourism’ was the motivation for their visit display greater exposure to the island, with most having visited several of the villages and participated in a broader range of social activities. Yet even among this group, the recreational landscape predominates in the selection of map features and only the administrative district at Tofol, where tourists must go for visas, information and the post office, is identified as a community.

The same trend pervades the maps of those who classified themselves as ‘mass tourists’ and those travelling to Kosrae on business. While Tofol remained the sole marker of habitation on every tourist map, there is a notable divergence by ethnicity and origin in the frequency and setting of selected landscapes, with East Asian tourists displaying the fewest sites but also greater uniformity in choice of sites (focused almost exclusively on places of accommodation and recreation).

Local geographies

The maps of residents, however, provide a great deal more information about the human landscape that is meaningful in its intimacy (figure 3). Most notably, the presence of local people is clearly indicated on every map through the depiction of individual homes, agricultural plots, and fishing sites. Every village is further identified as a separate neighbourhood, though, interestingly, Tofol is excluded from this representation of community.

Tofol’s exclusion may be explained by its more recent creation and role as a government centre. As a consequence, it is not viewed as a place traditionally inhabited by the Kosraean people and has yet to elicit much emotional or cultural attachment. Instead, the data collected suggest that Kosraeans determine a community by its history, while tourists depict places of service. In addition, residents indicate a much greater diversity of activity centres and recognise areas beyond the visitor periphery that historically served as routes of communication and transport, and were shared ‘centres of felt value, in which gendered rituals were practised (Tuan 1976: 38). Evidence of social organisation by gender is most notably depicted in the maps of older adult residents, who chose images that reflect their traditional spheres of work and knowledge. As farmers, men show a preference for naming inland areas, while women express greater cognisance of the marine landscape,

exhibiting a detailed knowledge of the coast and mangrove channels where they fish (Bodenhorn, 1993: 182-7).

Interestingly, this gender difference is absent from the maps of younger Kosraeans, both male and female, who exhibit a greater common awareness of the island as a whole than do their elders. For example, females and younger Kosraeans in general are more likely to be employed in tourism services, and thus become more familiar with the island's biota and landscape (Harvey, Hunt & Harris 1995: 358-62). Even among young adults *not* engaged in tourism, there is greater recognition of the island as a whole and most have circumnavigated it, a feat which was more difficult for their elders, who grew up when Kosrae lacked roads and vehicles and the only transportation was slow and water-borne. Perhaps as a consequence, the bonds of village identity that once prevailed among the population have blurred and relocation between municipalities is now more likely than it was pre-World War II (Bank of Hawai'i, 2000: 6).

There are also indications that younger Kosraeans are becoming disconnected from their own history, for there are notable differences across age groups in the identification and meaning of selected heritage sites. For example, residents under the age of 45 easily noted the shipwreck of the pirate, Bully Hayes, in Utwa Harbour, where an underwater marine park is planned, and where many islanders dive and swim. Yet none in this group depicted the various artefacts from the second World War that are scattered around the island, whereas nearly every Kosraean over the age of 60 included the remains of a Japanese tank along the Tofol-Malem road as a landmark.

Even more significant, perhaps, is the universal inclusion of the Lelu ruins on the maps of older Kosraeans (aged 60 and over), and their notable absence from maps prepared by islanders in their late teens and early twenties. For the former, the ruins are a visible symbol of the strengths - and decay - of their ethnic identity. Constructed more than 500 years ago, Lelu flourished as the feudal residence of Kosrae's kings and high chiefs for nearly 400 years, and the walled city once rivalled Nan Madol on Pohnpei in magnificence and political power (Cordy 1984: 3-4). In recent years, however, the monolithic stone canals and foundations have crumbled, as has their central place in Kosraean culture. Buried beneath pig sties and community garbage dumps, only elderly residents remain cognisant of their former capital's heritage value, while the Lelu ruins remain under-

appreciated by visitors (who receive only limited information) and younger residents, who visit them only infrequently on organised school tours. The black basalt walls of ancient Lelu are now inconspicuous behind houses and stores, and churches have supplanted the royal city as centres of communal interaction and congregation. This tangible devolution of power is hardly unique to Kosrae, but the dilapidated state of Lelu is a matter of growing concern among the island's educators and elders. For them, the restoration of the ruins, 'one of the most impressive historic sites in the entire Pacific' (Segal, 1989: 354) is essential if Kosraeans are physically and culturally to reconnect to their 'place' and their past.

Such data should therefore prove useful to tourism planners and developers, who may consider communities and tourists to be homogeneous, when in reality both categories are widely heterogeneous and frequently hold dissimilar notions of tourism as an appropriate tool of economic development. The variety in perception and experience of place further underscore the critical role that tourism plays in shaping the human mosaic of travel destinations. The cultural construction of the tourist destination, which is as much a process of 'place creation' as of community revival, represents a direct link between expectation and realisation, 'filtered through a local cultural sieve that produces a different set of outcomes' (Mowl & Towner, 1995: 106). A failure to consider these variations fully from the perspective of different users (visitor/resident, male/female, adult/youth) may thus seriously hinder efforts to understand tourism's long-term impacts on the broader community (Ringer, 1992: 10-12; Bender, 1993: 1-17).

Conclusions

Part of tourism's appeal for both visitors and local residents is that it provides an opportunity to engage in meaningful interaction with other people, cultures and places. In search of cultural immersion and environmental education, however, tourism may lead to the marketing of culture and the pursuit of the exotic, rather than to a reaffirmation of local culture. This situation is aggravated by the lack of experience and expertise in many Pacific island communities in reconciling the sometimes opposing goals of economic growth with cultural and ecological preservation (Norton, 1987: 67-68; Oakes, 1983: 57-60; Toops, 1992: 30-33; Relph 1981). A central issue for Kosraeans, therefore, has

two faces. What will be the long-term result of gradually replacing a landscape evolved through time, in-situ, with one that caters primarily to visitors' stereotypes while at the same time, trying to conserve their finite resources and increase awareness among young islanders of their own cultural history and identity as Pacific islanders?

While island residents welcome increasing numbers of international tourists, there is a corresponding awareness of tourism's paradox: in fostering economic growth, tourism may *also* directly and indirectly threaten the environmental qualities and cultural practices that sustain local people and constitute the very marks of their identity. Many social and behavioural transformations associated with tourism development and other modernisation processes already under way in Kosrae, including the preference for imported food, clothing and technical assistance, are not always apparent to the casual visitor. Instead, the vernacular myths and 'traditional' lifestyles perpetuated by local people are evident only when perceived through social intimacy and informed awareness.

Yet in a very real sense, these images of place represent the physical manifestation of an inhabited, socially constructed topography, around which people learn to communicate, play, motivate and navigate. Though admittedly at a more localised and personal level, such inter-subjective images can be as influential in determining the effectiveness of planning processes as scientifically more 'concrete' information that is buttressed by proven 'facts' (Saarinen, 1976: 1-8; Baines, 1991: 49-51; Sherriff & Wright, 1993: 24-27; Craik, 1995: 94-96; Conlin, 1997: 235-8; Robinson, 1997: 183-5; Gibson, McKean & Ostrom, 2000: 3-5; Boo, 1992).

For more than 500 years, through the decline of the power of Lelu to near-extinction and subsequent conversion to Christianity, Kosraeans have remained on their island, their actions given order by perceptions of time and space very different from those that now dominate. If tourism is to prove sustainable in Kosrae, careful thought must therefore be given to the ability and willingness of the community to evaluate and absorb the potential communal and social costs that tourism development will entail. A successful resolution requires the implementation and acceptance of appropriate management policies that provide clear, long-term benefits to both visitor and resident, and create positive links between residents' interests, nature conservation, and tourists' destination choice. These, in turn, requires a development model that is carefully attuned and responsive to the

perceptions, needs and expectations of local people. Without this, local support will not be forthcoming. It is here that cognitive maps may prove useful, for they make visible ‘our place in the world [and the manners by which we define and] orient ourselves’ (King, 1996: 40).

Admittedly, any map is an imperfect portrayal of a world that appears chaotic and complex, but cognitive images obtained in this study provide tangible evidence of the multiple ‘places’ experienced by different users as they negotiate the physical landscapes of the tourist destination. Also apparent is the presence of more abstract networks, for example, kinship structures and gendered roles in Kosraean society. While these landscapes may be ‘only a skeleton of what is real’ (Aberley, 1993: 5) they are influential in creating a common sense of community and identity. By synthesising these localised ‘maps of meaning,’ a generalised representation of local places and practices may thus be produced and integrated into a geographic information system (GIS) or other planning model (Yaeger & Brown, 1992: 62; Zenner, 1996: 94-97).

In this way, the use of perceptual mapping as a planning tool provides much-needed access to local processes and relationships organised by function and form. It also helps dispel the persistent notion that indigenous communities are always relatively homogeneous. Instead, the highly personalised and fragmented nature of the mental maps submitted by local residents and visitors to Kosrae demonstrates the variability and subjectivity of place definition and attachment. Continued analysis of such maps would thus enable community planners and managers on Kosrae to visualise critically and interpret variations in meaning and structure of social symbols and territory, and would help them to understand, and sensitively anticipate, problems of development before they arise or take hold. Such insights would substantially improve our understanding of the impacts and potential sustainability of tourism, not only on Kosrae, but also in similar coastal recreation settings throughout the world.

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FIGURES

1. Location of Kosrae State, Federated States of Micronesia.
2. Cognitive map of non-residents (visitors).
3. Cognitive map of residents.