TAKING BACK OUR COMMUNITIES FROM TOURISM POST COVID

During the COVID-19 lock down, we have heard reports of how once over-touristed places have been able to reclaim their streets and enjoy their cities free of hordes of tourists. Wealthy European cities such as Venice have endured a harsh pandemic, but the communities also seem able to notice and appreciate that lockdown has freed them of tourists so that they can for a brief moment once again enjoy their home and its beauty. Simultaneously, places that have been placed in very vulnerable positions of tourism dependency are suffering since the tourists no longer come, leading to joblessness and hunger. We see in places as varied as Hawai'i, Bali, Nepal and Peru that a most damaging form of tourism has been forced on them, taking precious land, water, culture and spirituality and shaping these into gated resorts, privatised beaches, endless junk souvenir shops, yoga retreats and sham ceremonies.

We recognise both the pain and the opportunity that this crisis brings us. We offer a nine-point plan to reset tourism.

1) Tourism is defined by the local communities, because it occurs in the homeplaces of local communities, it impacts their lives and they provide many of the workers for tourism. It is they rather than the tourism industry and the tourists who must set agendas.

2) We declare ecology, society and economy as interconnected. Public health and well-being depends on a strong society with full support for the public good and an ecological environment that is protected and valued for its inter-generational and multi-species support.

3) A policy of constant growth and expansion in tourism is not compatible with a fair and sustainable future. Growth approaches must be abandoned.

4) Globalisation processes have served the elite and powerful. We must revise our priorities to sustain local well-being rather than constantly grow vulnerable global supply chains.

5) Workers in both the formal and informal sectors of tourism have a right to fair pay, safe and secure work. It is the crime of the hospitality and tourism industries that they are characterised by wage theft, poor working conditions and precarious work.

6) Tourists have no right to tour. COVID-19 reminded us the doors can be shut.

7) Multinational corporations and powerful state corporations only have the right to do business in the jurisdictions where they pay adequate taxes and abide by environmental, social, employment and economic regulations. The days of the free-wheeling approach are over.

8) Tourism brings violence and supports state violence. We must activate solidarity with places under occupation, including Palestine, Kashmir, West Papua, Hawai'i, Guam, Western Sahara and others.

9) Tourism is not an end in itself. Tourism must serve societies and communities and fit in the larger sustainable development capacities of all places where it occurs.

Communities around the world have seen the negative consequences of tourism developments, processes and policies that only work to serve the needs of the tourism industry and compliant governments.

We must now join together and work to resist what we do not want but also to proactively create that which we do want.

The global protests that have ignited in response to the Black Lives Matter campaign show us that people are ready to stand up against exploitation and oppression. It is time we act against unjust forms of tourism and this plan is offered as an agenda for focus.

Tourism Alert and Action Forum

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