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# Accumulation by Dispossession in Tourism

Karl Schmid *York University*

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**Abstract:** Accumulation by dispossession (ABD) is deeply implicated in the broad history of tourism development at Luxor, Egypt. ABD informs a theme of loss found in ethnographic, historical and archival sources in three significant periods of tourism development: the formative period of tourism extending to the mid-18th century, the following mass tourism era and the post-1970s period. Dispossession including the absence of consent, violent appropriations, monopolistic practices, repeated displacements and the policing of space belie the discourse of tourism as exchange or economic development and reveal differently scaled dimensions of the exercise of power and hierarchy.

**Keywords:** accumulation by dispossession, tourism, development, displacement, loss

**Résumé :** L'accumulation par dépossession (APD) est profondément ancrée dans une histoire générale du développement du tourisme à Louxor, en Égypte. L'APD relève du thème de la perte que l'on retrouve dans des sources ethnographiques, historiques et archivistiques durant trois périodes significatives : la période formative du tourisme, qui s'étend jusqu'à la moitié du dix-huitième siècle ; celle du tourisme de masse ; puis, la période qui succède aux années 1970. Des dépossession découlant de l'absence de consentement, de violentes appropriations, de pratiques monopolistiques, de déplacements répétés et de la réglementation de l'espace démentent le discours du tourisme comme échange ou comme développement économique. De plus, ces dépossession révèlent des dimensions stratifiées de l'exercice du pouvoir, voire de la hiérarchie.

**Mots-clés :** accumulation par dépossession, tourisme, développement, déplacement, perte

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## Introduction

Like many anthropologists, I am most satisfied when my research articulates meaningfully with theory. My ethnographic and historical research on close to two centuries of tourism in a former ancient Egyptian capital, now known as the city of Luxor, duly incorporated what I felt was relevant theories related to tourism, development, colonialism, neoliberalism and governmentality. Yet there remained the nagging feeling that a thread connecting this “whole” intellectual exercise remained incomplete, despite finding its way into the shortened title: “Losing Your Place.” This theme of loss seemed to be echoed in a variety of disparate ethnographic and historical traces that touched on land, livelihood, consent, control, heritage and belonging. The total of losses seemed to me to transcend the theoretical frameworks I deployed that, when dealing with complex human practices and wide time spans, divulge their limitations and adherence to particular domains of analysis. If there can be theory that “fits” better, then it is worth seeking out.

Understanding and relating these multiple losses seems possible through David Harvey's (2003:137–182) theory of accumulation by dispossession based on Karl Marx's concept of primitive accumulation. Accumulation by dispossession refers to a broad range of predatory processes that lead to loss for some and the accumulation of capital (and more) by others. Harvey says that Marx's exploration of the original concept “had the quality of sketch” (146), and Harvey's work purports to paint in the scope and significance of it. As we will see in a review of the theory, Harvey's productive essay on the subject goes so far as to suggest that the relevance of accumulation by dispossession extends beyond the confines of capitalism itself. It is precisely this open utility and broad relevance that I have sought to exploit to better understand the practice of tourism at Luxor and the missing thread of loss.

This article outlines accumulation by dispossession as understood primarily by Harvey. I explore three significant periods of Luxor's tourism history, beginning with the formative period of tourism from the 17th to mid-18th century, when explorers, scholars and wealthy elite tourists made their appearance. This is followed by a consideration of the early mass tourism era ushered in by Thomas Cook on the Nile and at Luxor in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The third period under the lens includes the past decade and my ethnographic research, as well as significant developments of the tourism industry since the late 1970s. The point is to reveal different dimensions of accumulation somewhat ironically, by gathering or accumulating examples of a variety of processes. At the same time, I suggest that not only is there a diversity of processes worth examining but also that dispossession by accumulation is deeply implicated and involved in the broad history of tourism development at Luxor. It is present whether the discussion is of development, colonialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, governmentality or even, when considering hospitality, livelihood and sustainability. We can say that even Marx, despite identifying and naming it, missed its true significance, believing it merely birthed a new era of inequality, while we know today there is still no end of it in sight.

### **Accumulation by Dispossession**

Harvey's theory of accumulation by dispossession develops the perspective of Marx and others, such as Rosa Luxemburg, about the fundamental changes to economic systems brought about by capitalism (Harvey 2003; Luxemburg 1968; Marx 1976). One of capitalism's most important dimensions is as an economic system that is driven by the accumulation of capital and the reinvestment of the profits, thereby leading to more accumulation. The most recognized means of accumulation is to create surplus value through gains in productivity or decreases in wages, and through technological advances that also further productivity. The accumulation engine can stall, however, when there are limited profitable reinvestment opportunities. These accumulation crises are common in capitalism, and one method to solve them has been for capital to seek new places or new aspects of life not subject to accumulation and to subject them to this process. In that way, new lands, assets, objects and people can be used for further accumulation (Harvey 2003:137–144).

Therefore, accumulation occurs not only by the creation of surplus value but also through this second process of incorporating aspects of life previously not subject to the squeezing out of surplus value. This very

process of incorporation was the origin of the accumulation process itself and continues to this day. Marx labelled this as "primitive" accumulation, and Harvey renamed it "accumulation by dispossession" to emphasize that it is ubiquitous and not some passed-over stage (137–145). Marx described primitive accumulation processes such as privatization, commodification, displacement of peasants and farmers, changes to legal rights and the incorporation of common property, various financial and debt processes and large processes of appropriation through colonialism and imperialism. Harvey added contemporary examples such as biopiracy, Ponzi schemes, predatory and speculative raiding of companies and their assets, and even house "flipping" (145–152).

Given the predominant focus of Marxist theory on surplus value, Harvey critiques this privileging of the first form of accumulation over the second for its significant bias toward identifying workers as the most important or significant agent of resistance to capitalism and as the agent of its fall. He believes primitive accumulation was discounted or neglected in part because surplus value accumulation was considered somewhat progressive in developing new production forms, and Marx generally viewed capitalism itself as progressive in an evolutionary framework in which it would be superseded by socialism. The antecedent accumulations by dispossession that served to birth capitalism (among them, the enclosure movement and proletarianization) were viewed as unimportant in relation to the new battles over surplus value accumulation that would ultimately result in socialism (163–165). Therefore, Harvey believes that Marxist analysis marginalized primitive accumulation and missed an opportunity to integrate the processes of dispossession into a more sophisticated analysis of capitalism.

At the same time, accumulation by dispossession was helping to power capitalism through its accumulation crises. This occurred significantly through the spread of the political doctrine of neoliberalism from the 1970s onward, encouraged to move out of academia and into practice by British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, among others. Her privatization of social housing, the World Bank's promotion of utility privatization, the near-wholesale privatization of the Argentinian economy and the reformation of Mexico's indigenous collective property rights are all examples from the last several decades of this process of accumulation by dispossession, aided and often actively promoted by states (157–160). Harvey suggests that the movements arising in response to these dispossession processes have, until recently, been seen by a Marxist-influenced left as sharing broad anti-capitalist sentiments but rarely accepted

as effectively able to counter capitalism or to take the seemingly necessary step of attempting to seize the state in some manner (166). In other words, capitalism was being differentially experienced and conceptualized, leading also to the articulation of different forms of struggle with different aims. The Zapatistas are an example given by Harvey of resistance to accumulation by dispossession in the form of a loss of land rights, a very common process through which indigenous peoples have encountered capitalism. Unlike revolutionary workers' movements, the Zapatista response did not seek to capture or overthrow the state but to achieve a recognition of rights, greater degrees of autonomy and the preservation of non-capitalist forms of collective landholding (Harvey 2003:160, 166). For Harvey, giving a proper place to accumulation by dispossession may lead to finding common ground between movements focused on resisting or ending these two forms of capitalist accumulation.

Here, however, my concern is to broaden the analytical applicability of accumulation by dispossession so as to make it useful for analysis of social inequalities beyond capitalism and, particularly, for the study of social inequalities in tourism development. Harvey tentatively suggests that processes of accumulation by dispossession may be understood beyond capitalism by mentioning the role of dispossession in the Marxist/communist revolutionary tradition, which often organized

the equivalent of primitive accumulation in order to implement programmes of modernization in those countries that had not gone through the initiation into capitalist development. This sometimes meant similar levels of appalling violence, as with the forced collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union (the elimination of the kulaks) and in China and Eastern Europe. [2003:165]

In other words, dispossession is a productive and destructive activity of changing access to and use of land, resources and other things between people, and it is *not* unique to capitalism or socialism. Dispossession is to take away, to remove rights to something; in socialist revolutions, it often meant taking away private property rights or reducing concentrated holding of land, whereas in capitalism it has often meant dismantling collective ownership. There is loss, which is why it is relevant to my own work. The process of dispossession is one that, if sufficiently broadened theoretically, not only might have relevance to my observations and analyses but also might close the distance between the theory that I am using and the livelihood issues that many of my informants face in Luxor.

## Early Explorers and Tourists

Dispossession begins with a basic relationship between parties; with tourism, this relationship is usually one between outsiders coming to see and experience and the people who live there. In the case of Luxor, this relationship began with explorers and scholars who shared an outsider relationship with tourists and prepared the ground for them. This relationship does not necessarily involve capital accumulation, but it does involve accumulation. As Harvey points out, biopiracy is a form of dispossession; dispossession includes situations when people's cultural repertoires are used or appropriated and when outsiders benefit from representations and appropriations for their careers and reputations. This is why informed consent is seen by anthropologists and others as a mechanism (awkward and imperfect though it may be) to acknowledge and mark an exchange between scholars or researchers and the people they are studying. Formalized informed consent is fraught with questions and complexities, such as who is giving consent, how much participants understand the research and how reciprocity and compensation are handled. Even so, it recognizes that the opposite, an absence of consent, generally indicates an absence of any sort of mutual exchange relationship, leading to heightened power inequalities and possibly domination. In this way, I see "tourism," "studying" and "exploring" as appropriations and acts of dispossession, even if minor in many cases.

These forms of dispossession can be observed in the actions of four of Luxor's earliest known European visitors, and how they established relationships and reciprocity. They are the French Jesuit priest Claude Sicard, the first modern explorer to have identified Luxor as ancient Thebes in 1718; the English reverend Richard Pococke and the Danish artist and navy captain Frederick Lewis Norden (both visited in 1737); and the Scot James Bruce of Kinnaird (visited in 1769). All four were explorers and writers. Pococke (1743) wrote about his travels in Europe and the Near East. Norden was sent by the king of Denmark to explore the Nile and was the first European to assemble a comprehensive description of Egypt decades ahead of Napoleon's scholars (Norden 1755). Bruce was attempting to discover the source of the Nile, but his book documents his achievement as a debatable first discoverer only of the Blue Nile branch (Bruce 1790). Of the four explorers, it is only Sicard who seems willing to make the effort of establishing local, usually village-level, consent for his visits (Sicard 1982). He was fluent in Greek, Arabic and other languages and particularly adept at using *firman*s, kinds of licences, permits or passports that functioned

like letters or recommendations and sometimes were formal government-issued documents, often obtained through gift-giving (Barber 1998:521). Travellers would present firmans to the governors of regions and other authority figures to gain a right to pass through or to explore certain areas. Sicard obtained firmans at regional levels but also recognized that it would be wise to establish permission locally, often with the sheikhs of villages. For the most part, Sicard's approach allowed him to visit significant parts of Egypt without conflict, including the Luxor area.

The other three explorers failed to seek consent beyond national or regional officials, leading to conflicts. Pococke, the first of the visitors, neglected to obtain permission of the village of Ba'irat when he entered their territory to see the colossi of Memnon, two giant statues that once fronted an ancient temple (France 1991:5; Greener 1966:74–80). Pococke began to make rubbings of inscriptions on the statues but was soon challenged by villagers: "Some of them attempted to pull me away; but I continued on copying them out, till I had finished them all" (1743:102). Only days later, Norden would have a more difficult encounter with the Ba'iratians at the Colossi. He brought an armed exploratory party, and while he composed a drawing of the inscriptions on the giant northern statue, 50 Ba'iratians surrounded them and watched Norden with considerable interest. Norden refused their request for *baksheesh* (a gift, a tip, generally for service), and the sheikh of the village soon arrived and asserted that the foreigners should have asked permission. An exchange of intimidations ensued, ending with a threat by Norden that his armed party would kill the sheikh "like a dog" (1757:72). In this difficult position, with guns pointed at him, the sheikh backed down and retreated with his compatriots.

Considering these primordial tourist encounters, we can see that both Norden and Pococke arrived without obtaining consent and clearly saw it as their right to do as they pleased. The broader context was that the Luxor area was known as a particularly lucrative area for buried artifacts, which the inhabitants found or excavated, and the careful study of the writing on the statues could arouse suspicions about potential dispossessions. Yet this was instead a typical activity of another kind of dispossession: explorers intent on raising their own cultural capital and careers as writers and explorers (Bourdieu 1986) and unwilling to entertain even token compensation. This dispossession, although minor in one sense, was nevertheless constructed around a dispossession of autonomy that required the threat of violence. As with the visit of James Bruce, these encounters could end in serious injury. Bruce ignored the advice of

nearby villagers to avoid the Valley of the Kings unless he obtained permission beforehand. When exiting a tomb in the hilly valley, his party heard shouting and saw villagers rolling stones down a hill. Bruce shot his gun at them and later discovered he had wounded several, although his party was unhurt (1790:138). This was all in the name of "to see." But this practice of dispossession could make the careers and reputations of explorers, experts and other authorities, and it was linked with dispossessions (e.g., of national sovereignty) in articulating a right over others. In this way, tourism, like many human practices, can shift between registers of literal, threatened and symbolic violence. Tourists often practised the last through aggressive behaviour and the assumed right to make aesthetic judgments (Harrison 2003:137).

The visit of Vivant Denon in 1799 is a further refinement of "armed," non-consensual tourism, and it ushered in a new phase in which the state would be the firm guarantor of access. Denon was Napoleon's senior representation in the Commission, a group of artists, scholars and scientists sent at Napoleon's request to interpret and record Egypt following the French occupation (France 1991:8–13). The Commission was embedded with French troops involved in hunting down and eliminating former government forces fleeing south on the Nile from Cairo. Denon eagerly awaited any opportunity to visit the Luxor area and the Valley of the Kings. Given the military engagements and the hostility that the French engendered, he had to satisfy his absorption of the sights of Luxor only with quick visits when a military escort was available. On one pass through the area, possibly prompted by Denon's insistence, the army attempted a surprise assault on the Gournawi villagers who occupied the mountain area of burials and regularly resisted the French when they passed through (Denon 1973[1803], vol. 3:47–48). The attack was not a surprise, and while some villagers fled into the desert, others hid in their homes, which often contained subterranean tombs. The French attempted to smoke them out, and a battle ensued; Denon casually mentioned the cruelty used by the troops, though it is quite reasonable to assume it was a massacre. Bloodshed was so common to the expedition that Denon noted the many vultures that followed the army and "fed on what we left behind" (vol. 3:58).

It was near the end of the battle, with most Gournawis subdued and their sheikh held hostage, when an apparently unperturbed Denon seized his opportunity. While the French military was waiting for a ransom for hostages, Denon paid the survivors in the secured area to show him through the tombs. He bragged: "The clink

of money, that universal language, before which all hatred ceases, especially among the Arabs, had procured me friends with the fugitive inhabitants of Kurnu" (vol. 3:55–56). Denon was quite satisfied with his bought souvenirs, including a granite statue and the mummified head of an old woman (vol. 3:88). We do not know, but it is plausible that the Gournowis then used Denon's money to pay the ransoms.

"Hosts and guests" might be a discursive framing of the tourism industry today—it was also the title of the first edited volume on "the anthropology of tourism" (Smith 1977)—but this seems far from the practice of tourism as it was developing at this point in Luxor. A closer look at tourism in this early period reveals that tourism was rarely a consensual or exchange relationship but, rather, a relationship of dispossession and domination enforced by overt or implied violence. Europeans were free to go where they wanted without local permission. It was ordinary Egyptians who faced risks, restrictions and dispossessions. The explorer and Orientalist Edward Lane found it unnecessary for travellers to arm themselves "under the rigorous government of Mohham'ad Al'ee" (2000:220), while a mounted rural police had been instituted by the time a young Florence Nightingale visited as a tourist with family friends in 1850. Not only had the rural police "secured the safety of Europeans," but they also imposed collective punishments for offences:

Five years ago, a *dahabieh* was ordered to meet the governor of India, and was coming down the river. Some Arabs went on board and committed a murder and theft. The village was burnt to the ground and not one living soul spared, not even the child in its mother's arms. If you miss a pin now, the whole village is made responsible for it and the whole village bastinadoed. When we stop at night, the village is answerable for us and men relieve each other on guard the whole night, round our boat. [Nightingale 1987:45]

### Thomas Cook and Mass Tourism

Tourist numbers at Luxor and on the Nile were greatly augmented after 1869 because of the development of mass tourism by the English firm Thomas Cook (frequently shortened to Cooks). For 28 years Thomas Cook, the company's founder, had been organizing mainly European excursions and tours; in 1867 he had arranged for 20 thousand English to attend the Paris Exposition Universelle, providing them with hotel coupons that would be honoured by participating hotels in exchange for meals and accommodations—thus establish-

ing the basic arrangement behind the packaged, all-inclusive tours of today (Pudney 1953:157). Cook and his son, John Mason, who was even more involved in developing the Egyptian branch, immediately saw a tourism opportunity in Egypt, and within a few decades, Egyptian travel became the most profitable segment of the company. Cooks' dominance of Middle Eastern tourism by the end of the 1870s meant that more than three-quarters of English and American tourists travelled in their care (Brendon 1991:135). Here I draw attention to four main forms of dispossession that drove this lucrative tourism accumulation, including examples of early privatization, dispossession of livelihoods, a general monopolization of tourism expenditures and dispossession by displacement.

Cooks came to almost completely monopolize Nile tourism through successive waves of the privatization of Nile steamers, the fastest and most convenient form of Nile travel in the late 19th century. To develop mass tourism in Egypt, Cooks first negotiated in 1870 for the company's appointment as the government's agent for passenger travel on the new state postal steamers (Pudney 1953:194), and a year later they obtained control over the interiors to adapt them "to the tastes of Europeans and Americans" (Thomas Cook, *Excursionist*, 6 September 1871:1). This was followed up by a ten-year concession over the Nile steamers and Nile traffic (Thomas Cook and Son 1879), only to be moved up to the full-scale purchase and complete privatization of all steamers in 1882, when Egypt was made an English protectorate and occupied by 12 thousand British troops after the bombardment of Alexandria (Jankowski 2000:91). The British consul effectively ruled Egypt, managed British economic interests and guided the repayment of Egypt's substantial debts to Europe. The financial misfortunes of the Egyptian government gave Cooks the opportunity to purchase all steamers as a package and to conveniently make "payments by annual installments from fees he charged the government for postal, towage and other services," which had previously been outsourced to Cooks (Brendon 1991:137).

While this form of dispossession was a dispossession of the state under financial duress, the second form of dispossession was of livelihood—that of the dragomen, the early tour guides of the Middle East. In 1874, 18 Syrian and Egyptian dragomen wrote to the *London Times* about their grievances with the business practices of Cooks (1874:6): "During the last few years our living has been almost taken from us by English agents monopolizing the conveyance of tourists to this country in large companies." The Dragomen claimed that Cooks' advertisements led to the impression that tourists could

not travel by steamer other than with Cooks, implied by the company's status as "exclusive agents" for obtaining tickets, as well as the fact that, at the Cairo hotels, the steamers were called "Cook's steamers" (at that time they were still owned by the government). There was also a discursive war waged against the dragomen in Cooks' guidebooks and through his tourism publication, the *Excursionist*. Cooks would prevail, drawing away most of the tourism business, while many dragomen lost their livelihood. Those who went to work for Cooks and other tour operators found their burden increased because of the supervision of large parties of tourists, as only two dragomen would be hired for every steamer load of tourists (Thomas Cook and Son 1892).

A third act of dispossession built on the previous dispossessions of privatization and the destruction of independent livelihoods. Alongside the monopolization of tourists visiting Egypt was the general monopolization of the expenditures of the tourists through early forms of vertical integration. The all-inclusive concept Cooks developed allowed for the capture of the most significant expenditures by tourists: the costs of food, transportation and accommodations. Unlike practically all other destinations in its tourism empire, at Luxor, Cooks owned hotels partially or outright, including the Luxor Hotel, the Karnak Hotel and later the Winter Palace (Pudney 1953:197). John Mason Cook oversaw an economic juggernaut along the Nile, funding and benefiting from practically every angle of the tourist consumptive experience. At the end of the 19th century, journalist G.W. Steevens exclaimed: "You will find natives all up the Nile who practically live on him. Those donkeys are subsidized by Cook; that little plot of lettuce is being grown for Cook and so are the fowls ... you may see the natives coming up to him in long lines salaaming and kissing his hand" (1898:9).

The final layer of dispossession to be uncovered in this era is dispossession through outright displacement. As tourism grew, the need to provide convenience, access and appropriate representational spaces rose correspondingly. One of the clearest examples of this process is the displacement of the heart of the town to allow for the excavation of the Luxor Temple, built in 1400 B.C.E. In the succeeding centuries, the temple itself fell into ruins, and Luxor was erected on top of it, often incorporating its ruined columns and walls into homes and other structures. The inhabitation of the temple aroused very strong feelings in many early tourists, who deplored the present interfering with the imaginaries of the past; that it was "difficult to make picturesque" was the typical complaint (Warner 1876[1854]:196). Nightingale felt that Egyptian habita-

tion was virtually a historical crime: "the savages of the Present in the temples of the Past" (1987:77). Not long after Cooks' Luxor Hotel was built across the street from the temple, 40 families were forced to relocate from the site, with the last house removed on the death of its owner in 1888. Although it is not known whether Cooks had any role in this displacement, the company was significantly involved in the redevelopment of Luxor for tourism, so much so that the English Egyptologist Sir E.A. Wallis Budge, also the first author of Cooks' Egypt handbook, credits Cook with bringing "the forces of civilization" to bear on Luxor so that it could be made a pleasing place for European tourists (Budge 1910:580–581). The Luxor Temple relocations were among the first in a series of tourism displacements extending to the present.

### **Luxor—New Dispossessions since the 1970s**

The Luxor area post-millennium is a tourism site of layered dispossessions in time and place, affecting numerous dimensions of people's lives. Although I interviewed a wide range of tourism actors, my ethnographic fieldwork centred on the "informal" guides: Egyptians who hoped to create a livelihood out of meeting tourists in the streets and guiding them to a range of goods, services and experiences. They wait near hotels, on the corniche along the Nile and wherever tourists use public spaces. Some own small shops or felucca sailboats, but most try to gain either guiding income or commissions for bringing business to others. With national chains and international tourism companies like TUI AG and Accor dominating the tourism industry, the guides have rejected formal jobs in the tourism industry that almost always pay below the UN poverty line and involve very long hours, menial work and, not infrequently, workplace harassment. They opt instead for entrepreneurial work because it offers at least the potential of a more substantial living, although in so doing they confront at least three contemporary forces of dispossession threatening their livelihoods. The first is that they find it increasingly difficult to approach tourists, as tourism corporations through their professional guides carefully watch them, while more independent tourists are warned against dealing with them in guidebooks (Gloaguen 2002:241; Humphreys and Jenkins 2002:291). The second process of dispossession occurs when they are regularly cleansed from tourism spaces by policing. Finally, the larger tourism governmentality that is reshaping the city is reinforcing these two processes and even further limiting the spaces in which they can effectively operate.

The control of the millions of tourists by the tourism corporations today continues the dominance over Luxor originally developed by Thomas Cook. The control is executed through vertical integration so that the vast majority of tourists rarely step into public spaces without being supervised and chaperoned by company tour guides. Most hotel beds on land are owned by hotel chains such as Accor (six hotels), Starwood (three hotels), Hilton and Sonesta. The first three companies are among the world's ten largest hotel groups; the last is a smaller American hotel chain focused on Egypt (MKG Consulting 2005). The Egyptian ownership of Pyramisa Isis, the largest hotel in Luxor, is connected to the pre-revolutionary regime of Hosni Mubarak. The same general pattern of dominant ownership is found with the cruise ships, where German-based TUI AG shares ownership of the largest fleet. TUI is a global exemplar of vertical integration, having gone so far as to purchase its own airport (Coventry, England), "one of the most profitable acquisitions to date" (Dennis 2005) to integrate and "deliver its customers' dream holidays from a single source," through its travel agencies, airlines, hundreds of hotels, thousands of tour guides and cruise ships (TUI AG 2005). Some of the informal guides articulated their position in relation to these enormous global operators as *ala bab Allah*, translating as "on the doorstep of God." This phrase communicated a sense of their precarious livelihoods on the margins of the industry. When the guides observed tourists moving under the careful watch of company tour guides, some would complain they were "plastic tourists." When I asked what they meant, they responded, "You cannot eat plastic tourists." Like biopiracy or the enclosure movement, plastic tourism is the dispossession of a resource that could be of widespread benefit.

This modern form of Cooks' vertically integrated dispossession did not emerge automatically. In the post-colonial era, it took shape through the *Infitah*, or "opening," to the West in the 1970s, when the government enacted laws and encouraged investment reforms, as did many developing countries. In Egypt international tourism corporations gained the ability to repatriate profits easily, to import construction and maintenance equipment duty free and to have up to eight-year tax-free "holidays" (World Bank 1979:6). Although there were plenty of hotel beds for tourists and the occupancy rate was low even according to the World Bank (1979:3), both the bank and UNESCO, who produced reports on tourism development for the Egyptian government, nevertheless argued that there was a critical shortage of the right hotel beds—those of international chain hotels (UNESCO 1979:9). The construction and opera-

tion of these hotels was made possible by costly infrastructure spending funded through Egypt's borrowing from the World Bank. With this construction, one pathway of development was closed, and, instead, a high-growth strategy was pursued that increased the volume of tourism. Yet this vertically integrated tourism has brought mostly low-paying jobs, and poverty remains widespread, so much so that a local doctor lamented to me that many working families were increasingly unable even to afford *fuul*, a fava bean dish that often formed the only protein at breakfast. As with most resort or enclave development throughout the global south there has only been the reinforcement of "historical patterns of colonialism and economic dependency" (Lea 1988:10), with a corresponding high "leakage" of tourist expenditures (Brohman 1996; Jaakson 2004).

In conjunction with this all-inclusive and exclusive tourism, the guides face the social cleansing of the very public spaces in which they attempt to engage with non-plastic tourists. In striking up a conversation with tourists, the guides are breaking the law, as speaking with tourists is illegal for those who are not the employee of a large tourism company or who do not have the credentials of a professional tour guide. This is part of a deliberate strategy of reducing the activity of the informal guides, as recommended by the World Bank and UNESCO since the late 1970s. UNESCO (1979:23) proposed policing to eliminate the activities of the informal guides, and another World Bank plan (ADL 1982), which dealt with "visitor management," sought the increasing isolation of the tourist from the resident through augmented enclaving and policing (Mitchell 1995:9). Compounding these issues, heavy security fell on Luxor in the form of increased policing and a military presence in the streets after a deadly terrorist attack in 1997 by a non-local militant Islamic cell at one of the area's temples. This greatly intensified the control of public space. Guides now faced extortion demands from security forces, made with the threat of incarceration or heavy fines, which cut deeply into any tourist income. At other times there are "sweeps" of public spaces, requiring guides' relatives to come down and ransom them from Luxor's police station. In other words, the new security apparatus and policing creates a parallel form of dispossession of the gains the guides do manage to extract from a plastic tourist economy.

In Luxor and in relation to tourism, the ultimate vehicle of dispossession may turn out to be the 1990s Comprehensive Development Plan for Luxor (CDCL), promoted by the UN Development Programme and sponsored by Suzanne Mubarak, the former president's wife (ABT Associates 1999:19). A masterful work of

tourism governmentality, which covers everything from large-scale infrastructure projects to the colours people are allowed paint their houses (ABT Associates 1996), CDCL execution was initially delayed because of the militant Islamic insurgency in the 1990s. It has now been significantly implemented and is in the process of transforming Luxor more radically than it was in the Cookian era. The Gournowi hamlets visited by Denon and attacked by the French army are now virtually depopulated because residents, whose livelihoods depended on their close proximity to the tombs and tourism, have been relocated far away from the nearby tombs to boost visitor numbers. Meanwhile, the CDCL envisioned the transformation of most of central Luxor into an “open-air museum,” making tourism use dominant along most of the Nile corniche and involving the re-creation of the Avenue of the Sphinxes, a ceremonial corridor that once linked the Luxor and Karnak temples. More than a hundred homes, three schools, a hospital and even the local governorate headquarters are in the process of being relocated, effectively erasing any remnants of the original town that existed before the arrival of tourists in the late 19th century, and displacing smaller businesses and restaurants because of soaring land costs. Work has also begun on the construction of an enormous separate tourism enclave south of the city, called El-Toad, centred on a golf course and ringed by high-end hotels and villas. For area residents, the dominant employment option at this enclave will be more low-paying jobs.

Framing these processes as ones of dispossession, in addition to being the effects of capitalism, colonialism, governmentality or neoliberalism, not only relates them in a much larger contextual setting but also demonstrates how dispossession underlies all of them. As well, an analysis of accumulation by dispossession seems to best co-articulate and co-relate an academic theoretical analysis with the thrust of the livelihood struggles faced by the informal guides and other Luxorians. Moreover, this dispossession perspective does not, for example, isolate tourism in paradigms of governmentality or neoliberalism but, rather, points to tourism’s imbrication within a much broader culture of dispossession affecting Egypt, one with very long historical roots that seems to have intensified over the last few decades. In Luxor the forces of dispossession are so pervasive that one informal guide told me he felt it epitomized not only his own story but most of all that of Ali, the “peanut man,” a man a few years older than he. Ali owned a small pushcart on wheels from which he worked the Nile corniche to sell nuts and seeds in paper slips to tourists and Luxorians. Sami said that Ali was quite intelligent and had just

finished college, but, being from a fairly poor family, lacking *wasta*, or “connections,” and not finding work elsewhere, he borrowed money to purchase the cart. Yet, despite a modest and unobtrusive business that could barely support him and his parents, Ali was regularly harassed by the police and pressured for money under the threat of the confiscation of his cart. To Sami, this was an example of a culture of “taking away.” Years later, after the recent Arab Spring movement and a series of revolutions in the region, Ali’s story resonates for me with that of the informal Tunisian fruit seller, Mohamed Bouazizi, who immolated himself on 17 December 2010 to protest the fines, beatings, demands for bribes and confiscations of his cart and equipment (Fahim 2011). The protests following his death ignited the beginning of the Arab Spring in sympathy with the outrage at regimes and the wealthy minority that not only take the best for themselves but also reproduce a culture of dispossession in which not even the meagre livings of street fruit and nut vendors are spared.

## Conclusion

In the first tourism era, it could be argued, explorers and tourists engaging in exploration and tourism acquired various forms of cultural capital. The early interactions discussed seem to suggest that this cultural capital accumulation came through a sometimes subtle, other times not so subtle, form of dispossession. The first loss experienced by Egyptians in Luxor was that of the right to give consent, to refuse people if they wished. Hospitality is meaningless if it must always be offered, and any obligation of reciprocal relations or compensation is invalidated by dispossession. Tourism was a crop that others valued and wanted to harvest but also wanted to take for free. As we have seen, the threat of violence and sometimes its practice were frequently present as part of these dispossessions. These were still not capitalist relations of dispossession, unlike in the next era, wherein the powerful presence of Cooks indicates a profit-seeking accumulation venture. Cook’s early vertical integration model meant that his tourism empire was a formidable force, reshaping the livelihoods of the dragomen and countless others in the Luxor area. Its monopolization of Nile tourism in particular, however, rested on dispossessions and massive accumulations that left the playing field nearly empty. It captured most tourists before they set foot in Egypt and drove away its competitors, the dragomen, by essentially monopolizing the main means of transportation and accommodation, the Nile steamers. This privatization and monopolization was carried out in the context of



the dispossession attending an indebted Egypt, not to mention the foreign troops waiting in the wings.

Since then, the losses have become more extensive. The displacements of people from their homes and livelihoods have fanned out from the initial hotspots and have involved a forced outmigration from multiple epicentres of accumulation, attracting national and transnational capital. Homes, schools and government buildings *must* be moved. There is no shortage of reasons as to why land, livelihoods and various resources have to be compromised and sacrificed. Not a few Luxorians see these endless, formal, low-paying tourism jobs as bringing them little prosperity; therefore, they attempt entrepreneurial work in the public spaces. Even these spaces are being taken away or turned into further spaces of dispossession. Those who seek to make their livelihoods through tourism, apart from formalized incorporation into the low-wage workforce, often face being criminalized or simply displaced from the most productive areas. The security apparatus that polices the spaces is divided between those on the street who wish to take a cut of informal income and those in the high offices who are involved in a kind of tourism governance, shaping the city into a hassle-free shopping experience for tourists. Sometimes unfathomable processes of governmentality and dispossession work to remove basic choices such as the colour or location of one's house or building. The area of Luxor is under massive appropriation by tourism through cooperation between the government of Egypt, multilateral institutions and national and transnational tourism corporations.

There are many more dispossessions related to tourism at Luxor that could be included. Among them is the extensive plundering of the archaeological heritage of Egypt by colonial powers, particularly in the first four decades of the 1800s, when Europeans removed from Luxor and Egypt thousands of antiquities that included statues, inscribed blocks, obelisks, mummies, sarcophagi, necklaces, amulets, scarabs, papyri and vases (Greener 1966:128). The massive stone head of Ramses II is in the British Museum, while Luxor's obelisks stand in European capitals, including the Place de la Concorde in Paris. Dispossession is also arguably present in the unequal allocation of resources and infrastructure development. The CDCL development plans reveal that the tourist enclaves are extremely demanding in terms of electricity use, with five-star daily consumption estimated at more than six times resident use, and water use estimated at twice as much (ABT Associates 1999:90, 2000:24–35). The proposal for a second golf course in the baking Saharan sun seems a foolish project

when Egypt will be considered a “water-scarce” country by 2025 with less than a quarter of the amount of water that was available per person in 1955 (Laki 1998:289–290).

While Harvey does point out that accumulation by dispossession is not exclusive to capitalism, he does not significantly develop the overall implications of this concept. Such an expansion would suggest a broader definition; perhaps that accumulation by dispossession is the removal of something, physical or symbolic, in such a way that it significantly changes the relationship between people or groups. I would suggest that this dispossession could be theorized as a form of hierarchical relation, since it requires some level of domination not present in a relation of exchange. David Graeber (2011:109), for example, points out that exchange takes place between relative social equals, while relationships of hierarchy should not be considered exchange as they do not, even if they are justified in these terms. Hierarchy involves relations of power and the ability to dominate others. “Whenever the lines of superiority and inferiority are clearly drawn and accepted by all parties as the framework of a relationship and relations are sufficiently ongoing that we are no longer simply dealing with arbitrary force, then relations will be seen as being regulated by a web of habit or custom” (110). Tourism has emerged as a hierarchical custom that is nevertheless symbolically categorized as a process of exchange (relations of hosts and guests, or as bringing the benefits of economic development). Rarely in the global south is the social field not conditioned by colonialism, post-colonialism and inequalities between tourists and local people. As was demonstrated in the earlier tourism period in which local-outsider relationships were established, relations of exchange and reciprocity were largely rejected, while hierarchy was reproduced by the threat of force.

This exploration of accumulation by dispossession in tourism argues that it is a productive frame through which to view social relations of inequality or hierarchy. I also see it as a frame that helps to decrease somewhat the alienating distance between ethnographic subject and ethnographer created by theorizing. It is with the issue of livelihood that I feel dispossession has one of its strongest connections, since it is when one feels dispossessed of the ability to have a livelihood (a job, meaningful and non-degrading work) that one's very existence feels threatened. Therefore, not only are governmentality, neoliberalism and the production of space most often the means of accomplishing dispossession, but, unlike these concepts, dispossession is an open and self-

descriptive concept relatable to one of the most important human concerns: the possibility of threats to reasonable lives and livelihoods for people no matter the economic or political system in which they currently live.

*Karl Schmid, Department of Anthropology, 2054 Vari Hall, York University, 4700 Keele St., Toronto, Ontario, M3J 1P3, Canada. E-mail: kschmid@yorku.ca.*

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