

Culture, Nature and Development in a Context of Change: Discourses of Tourism and Senses of Place in Mancora, Northern Peru

My PhD research is an ethnography of the impact of global tourism in local cultures in Latin American societies. Using the case of Mancora, a former fishing village, now turned into a beach town in Northern Peru, I aim to understand how the recent circulation of renewed ideas about economic development, culture, and nature are changing the relationship that local inhabitants establish with their vulnerable natural environment.

My nine months fieldwork period started in early September 2010, and finalised it by the end of April 2011. During this period I spent most of my time living in Mancora, Piura, with a local family involved in tourism. However, as my PhD research methodology gives priority to what is called the 'multi-sited ethnographical approach', I spent some time working in Lima, Talara and the city of Piura to cover all these levels of society. My fieldwork was sponsored by the Post-Graduate Travel Grant 2010 awarded by the Society of Latin American Studies (SLAS), and the Santander International Exchange Bursary -December 2009-2010- given by Santander Bank in association with Newcastle University.

1) Mancora

Mancora is a coastal district of the province of Talara, in the region of Piura, with approximately 11, 000 inhabitants. While living in Mancora, I carried out a wide variety of activities but within them I gave special attention to obtaining discourses about tourism and place, and getting a detailed knowledge of the dynamics of this activity. Thus, I observed the day to day life of local inhabitants involved in tourism and conducted interviews with key informants: former and current authorities from different sectors of society (Municipality, 'Comunidad Campesina', the fishing sector, local leaders and members of local associations, etc.), artisans, immigrants, and representatives of the private sector (hotel owners, bars, restaurants, etc.).

I attended public events, meetings and workshops organised by local leaders and state agents on a national level working on the development of tourism. I made participant observations in different spaces and times during my residence in order to understand the dynamics of tourism in this locality. I made archival research in the archives of the Municipality of Mancora and the 'Comunidad Campesina', as well as within personal folders of inhabitants who allowed me to study them. Amongst many other activities which I conducted, I also accompanied the day to day life of local dwellers working on tourism as well as walks throughout the district.

2) Talara and Piura

Talara is one of the nine provinces of the Region of Piura, in Northern Peru. Therefore, Mancora is not only related to Talara politically, economically, and administratively but also socially, and tourism works as an important link between these two geographical spaces and levels of society. Thus, in order to grasp characteristics of tourism dynamics I decided to attend to every public meeting taking place at this level of society during my residence in Mancora. These meetings turned out to be very rich spaces full of discourses about tourism and place where local authorities talk about the touristic resources of their districts and express their interests in tourism as a development tool, while others used them to request help from the authorities in solving the various problems which have arisen as a result of tourism. At this level of government I also conducted interviews with official agents and actors of the private sector that have been promoting tourism in the province during the last decades.

In Piura I searched for bibliographical sources within the Regional Library of the city of Piura, and libraries of the private University of Piura and "Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado Peruano" (CIPCA). I also established contact with staff members of NGOs and institutions carrying out projects throughout the region related to the topics of my research. I interviewed regional specialists on the "El Niño" phenomenon and tourism, as well as authorities of the Regional Government of Piura, the Regional Direction of Foreign Trade and Tourism (DIRCETUR), and the Provincial Municipality of Piura. I also attended meetings and workshops organised by the Vice-Ministry of Tourism with members of the private sector, as well as with regional, provincial, and local authorities. These meetings were very important as they become rich spaces to obtain information about the

dynamics of tourism at the regional level as well as to observe the tensions resulting of the contact between agents from different levels of society engaged in tourism development.

4) Lima

I visited the capital of Peru, Lima, several times to get data from academic and official institutions as well as to conduct interviews with key informants. Firstly, I went to Lima in October 2010 to assist and present a paper in the international conference organised by the 'Anthropology of Tourism Diploma' of the Catholic University of Peru. Secondly, I visited Lima from mid November until mid December; during this visit I made bibliographical searches in libraries of the Catholic University of Peru and the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP). I also conducted interviews with official agents of the Vice-Ministry of Tourism and the Commission for the Promotion of Peru (PROMPERU) as well as people related to Mancora but now based in Lima. Also, I approached specialists who are experts in the topics I want to explore more deeply in my thesis. Finally, I returned Lima on March 15th to interview official agents and authorities of the public sector and agents of the private sector involved in tourism development on a national level, mainly staff members and past and current authorities of the Vice-Ministry of Tourism and PROMPERU.