

LOCAL LANDSCAPES AND THE CROSSROADS OF ETHNOTOURISM: REFLECTIONS ABOUT TOURISTIC PROJECTS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN LOS LAGOS REGION (CHILE)

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In the last decades, indigenous communities of southern Chile have growing expectations of increasing their income by developing ethnotourism. Tourism acquires the dimensions of a mythical narrative that promises alleviation of current grievances. Meanwhile, the public sector sees tourism as a means for integrating marginalized communities through their participation in the market. The supply of traditional goods, mainly food and handicrafts, is seen as a development strategy for these communities. Such narrative obscures the complex relation between local actors and institutional practices. Thus, ethnotourism deserves to be analyzed considering: (i) As a modern discourse that while highlighting specific features of the native culture obscures its relation to society in general, and (ii) as space of interrelation for myriad actors including the State, touristic agencies and indigenous and local inhabitants. As discussed in this paper, the communities of the Llesquehue and Contaco estuaries in the X Region of Los Lagos in Chile invite an alternative approach to ethnotourism that, considering the local landscape, allows identifying critical issues to consider in devising the touristic activity as a means for reinforcing community relations, beyond the limitations of an ethnotouristic approach.

The concept of landscape contributes to understand the local scene from the varieties of lifestyles and practices that have been locally deployed, including traditional indigenous and non indigenous. In this sense, the landscape gives voice to the many voices that are shaping its meaning. In this view, tourism appears as a link between cultural worlds, mythic geographies and traditional encounters. Landscape, in contrast, with the environment, creates an evanescent association between sites and meanings, while turning the world into a place. As opposed to the equally important notion of territory, landscape implies a sense of belonging instead of a sense of possessing; thus, it admits the cohabitation of several groups in the same setting.

By means of recovering cultural forms of hospitality, alternative development projects may be devised, stimulating new kinds of touristic demand, while creating conditions for an inclusive and horizontal relation among communities that are not traditionally included in the promotion of this activity.

The site of this research corresponds to a coastal area that, along the twentieth century, lends itself as a land of refuge for marginalized people. For its inhabitants, this place is full of stories that go back, according to the local parlance, to the first founding Mapuche Huilliche families that were forced settle down as a result of their defeat by the Spaniards in the XVIII century. The land offered them the protection of the coastal range and the concentration of few but heterogeneous resources close to the water streams in what is an estuarine area. Originally the area was occupied by a coastal population, Cuncos, due to the invasion and war, was pushed further south, being replaced by the Mapuche-Huilliche who escaped the occupation of the central valleys. In 1820, the area is fully integrated to the Chilean nation, and in 1840 it was opened to the colonization by Germans. Early on in the XX century, the coastal area was integrated to a large German-owned farm.

Although the indigenous population was for long settled in the area, it was not until 1996 that they were recognized by the Chilean authorities: 80 families were given full access to three farms, comprising 5,107.39 hectares. Other thirty families received 1,562 hectares south of the river Llesquehue. These lands represent an interesting enclave from a touristic point of view and such has been the understanding not only of the indigenous families but also of those non-indigenous residents of the area that, as a whole, is known as Pucatrihue (place of several water streams), located seventy kilometers west of the city of Osorno.

The landscape is dominated by a rainy climate and by the mountain range, where human intervention has eroded forest important resources. Currently, the three main groups that share this area are: (i) The indigenous communities inhabiting the riversides of the Llesquehue River; (ii) The Chilean families coming from Osorno who have built second houses near Pucatrihue; and (iii) The artisanal fishermen who rely from fishing as much as from seafood gathering in the coastal reserve under their control.

The summer town of Pucatrihue is at the center of the touristic activity. From a spatial point of view a historic and mythic triangle may be recognized. One of its vertices corresponds to the rock of the Abuelito Huenteao, a mythical founding figure in the indigenous cosmology, and from this point two water streams converge coming from the mountain: Llesquehue at the north, and Contaco at the south. The opposite side of Abuelito Huenteao's rock is the mountain range that allows some protection to the locals during most of the twentieth century. Beyond that border, tree plantations dominate the area. The northern corner of this triangle allows a visual control to the local indigenous community of El Manzano while the southern corner corresponds to the Chilean area of influence.

The cosmological pattern embodied in this triangular shape provides a chart for inspiring a community-oriented touristic project. If, on the contrary, the pattern is dismissed by developers again the area will witness a displacement of the local population by commercial interests more efficient from a market viewpoint. The touristic development of the Pucatrihue area is analyzed having as background the meanings that mythical experience has for the indigenous residents: the notion of reciprocity between settlers and visitors and the abundance of coastal resources that in exchange they get from Abuelito Huenteao's generosity.

However, as suggested in this paper, contemporary landscape is also inhabited by non indigenous residents. The advent of these newcomers was announced by local prophets

in an exercise of mythopraxis. The prophets' words are kept alive in the memories of local indigenous residents, and some episodes concur to their validation. «They will come», they were told. And they came. First in small airplanes and, afterwards, they built houses, and when it was possible, they built roads.»The road will reach the ocean», a great grandfather predicted. Nobody was then thinking about roads, but the road reached the ocean. And with it, bad things were to be expected. The Abuelito Huenteano, annoyed by this intrusion, would punish the humans with the rising of the waters and the flooding of every visible piece of low land. In 1946, the road was authorized, and, in 1960, after it was finished, the tsunami of 1960 took place. The lowland was indeed flooded. The abundance was now underwater. The 1960 earthquake and tsunami is the beginning of the new age in the local history.

Unnoticed, this mythical script has underlain the development of interethnic relations, first, and tourism, later. The ancestral figure and its rocky house were kept by the indigenous population as a site of cult and devotion. But the Abuelito kept his prerogatives due to the interest that residents place in him. The three sectors converge in Abuelito's site. His house, the rock is at the center of the coastal management area of the fishermen. Meanwhile, it is at the center of the most valued scenery praised by tourists and visitors.

Abuelito Huenteano, as a thread in the touristic project, is fragile. He has provided an image that has been cultivated as an attraction by local residents. However, this image has been constructed in abstraction of the historic relationships that tie the three groups together, so the earlier grievances are still alive. Any of the new residents see this as a market opportunity and quickly they relate the image to ongoing projects concerning the bi-national relation with Argentina and the touristic routes that might be worked between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. The Bi-Oceanic Corridor is, out of any doubt, an important contextual ingredient. But authorities see no *development* in the area. Everything has to be built. And under such a statement, the indigenous community, once again, comes under threat.

An option, discussed in this paper, invites to reconsider the image of Abuelito Huenteano as a source for an alternative view of tourism, a view that privileges the integration among every sector in the community. Three considerations are drawn from the mythical discourse in the view of a social practice. The first concerns the definition of the local landscape, the second relates to the interaction among the diverse groups, and, the third, the definition of the touristic segment that best suits local development.

As said, concerning the landscape, the cosmological center of the whole territory is Abuelito Huenteano's island. This center is connected not only to the local area but, through ritual practices of indigenous communities, to the interior up to lake Ranco, some two hundred kilometers eastwards. Such axis provides a powerful tool for touristic planning. Indeed, more than stimulating local touristic agents to develop Pucatrihue as a touristic site, the mythical geography invites to consider an entire area to engage local actors in committing themselves to a large scheme of cooperation. In such a view, micro histories and micro trajectories may be taken into account for designing touristic routes and for promoting encounters among communities from a similar social and historic stand.

From the viewpoint of the diverse actors that participate in Pucatrihue's area, several touristic initiatives have been promoted. From north to south, diverse cultural practices

come into attention for touristic purposes: seaweed gathering, small agriculture, firewood gathering, gathering and use of non timber forest resources, along with traditional food and lodging concentrate in the northern part of the area. The central coastal area offers some sparks of the German tradition, and a small lodge from the same cultural background, while the fishermen have developed some activities taking advantage of the Abuelito Huentao's rock and the wildlife (mainly penguins) that finds in the area an important site for reproduction. Navigation and an artistic contest (with the Abuelito as the main theme) are currently sponsored by the fishermen union. However, the independent exercise of these activities stimulates competition and hostility among the three groups. What is needed is to coordinate such initiatives. A shift in the way the interests of the groups are defined is the third challenge that this article discusses. Touristic operators are invited to understand themselves as belonging to the same landscape and that the power of each is the result of the empowerment of all. The design of the touristic supply is a matter that concerns new definitions of the interest groups that operate in the area.

In terms of the touristic segment to be stimulated by this initiative, this paper proposes to include a segment that rarely, if ever, is considered for this purpose: the indigenous communities of the interior. By means of subsidizing social sector that never have had vacation as understood in Chile would really stimulate something that could provide basis for equity and fairness in access to nature and culture. Such an alternative is a means of including tourism as a means for achieving social goals.

Ethnotourism, from the view point developed here, is not the best companion for understanding and promoting touristic development based on a fair articulation, both internal and external, of indigenous communities. Instead, the notion of transcultural tourism might be better developed for such a purpose.