

Cultural Tourism Research Methods

Greg Richards and Wil Munsters

The consumption of culture is one of the most important aspects of tourism activity. Cultural tourism includes experiencing local culture, tradition and lifestyle, participation in arts-related activities, and visits to museums, monuments and heritage sites. This book reviews a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research methods applied to the field of cultural tourism, including surveys, mystery tourist visits, visitor tracking, grand tour narratives, collage, researcher-created video, photo-based interviews, ethnographic and actor-network approaches.

It provides a practical guide on how to conduct research as well as a discussion and evaluation of the methods, making it an ideal resource for students and researchers in tourism and leisure.

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14 Ethnographic Research on Cultural Tourism: an Anthropological View

Xerardo Pereiro

Methods of Anthropological Research

The epistemological bases of anthropological research methods

A research project in anthropology must begin on the basis of specific epistemological, methodological and technical considerations. The epistemological framework of a project defines questions relevant to the paradigms that will be used and the research problem itself, as is common in scientific research in general. Overall, it theoretically frames the conceptualization of the research subject. It is on this epistemological basis that the design of the problem being researched is built.

Regarding the methodological considerations that must precede the initiation of a project, we must be clear about why certain social research techniques will be used, their meaning and significance, their underlying principles and their connection with the epistemological framework and the problem under study. In reference to the general area of technique, we must consider the specific social research tools that are most adequate to the problem and to the field being investigated. If the methods may be considered to be the way of organizing the research process to achieve our aims, the techniques are the specific procedures used in applying this organization.

The articulation of these three levels will allow a better design and development of a research project. Regarding the epistemological levels, in the social sciences there are two dominant approaches: quantitative and qualitative. For both of them, there are two possible perspectives:

- The perspective of viewing these approaches as oppositional and distinctive.
- The perspective of seeing these approaches as interrelated, which implies a mixed focus, supporting the idea of a continuum between both approaches and the combined use of both, depending on the specific research problems, contexts and situations being examined.

From the first perspective, we can establish a dichotomy originating in the historical beginnings of the modern social sciences (Table 14.1):

Positivism stresses the natural sciences as the model for the social sciences through the measurement of quantitative and manipulated variables in order to study their relationship, resulting in data which are used to verify specific theories. Researchers using a positivist approach look for evidence of the operation of universal laws through statistics, surveys, sampling and the generalization of results, appealing to

Table 14.1. Quantitative and qualitative foci in the social sciences.

	Quantitative focus	Qualitative focus
Spiritual fathers	August Comte, Émile Durkheim (positivism)	Max Weber
Principle	'Scientific' research connected to the natural sciences (e.g. physics) looks for facts and causes	Social phenomena are different from physical phenomena. Human behaviour is not mechanical
Objective	To measure things or phenomena, looks for facts and causes	To look for understanding ('verstehen'), subjective meanings and an understanding of the context
Methodology	Statistical methods, surveys and experimentation	'Ideal types', description of the concrete experience, its rules, social patterns and social meanings
Analysis of social reality	To look for universal laws through explanation, deduction, sampling, generalization of results, use of variables and verification of the answers and hypotheses	To try to understand the frameworks of the social actors To analyse the way people understand the world; inductive rather than hypothetical-deductive

Adapted from Hammersley and Atkinson (1994: 17); Taylor and Bodgan (1998: 15–30); Hernández Sampieri *et al.*, (2006: 3–30).

universal laws that are thought to remain constant and establish regular relationships between variables. Positivism differentiates between science and common sense and observes reality based on the senses according to the principles of traditional empiricism (Mauss, 1988; Durkheim, 1982).

The opposite stream represented by phenomenology and hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1978; Lisón Tolosana, 1983) defends a different type of research, arguing that the main objective of the social researcher should be to find out what happens in a place, the meaning of the actions for those involved and their representation. Social phenomena and social relationships, being different from natural and physical phenomena, cannot be understood in terms of cause and effect or on the basis of universal laws. Social actions obey intentions, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, values, meanings, senses, feelings and emotions, none of which can be reduced to a quantitative law.

From another perspective, the quantitative and qualitative approaches intersect in a mixed perspective (see Part II of this volume); even though one may dominate the other, they are both employed together in many research projects. This eclecticism justifies the idea that these two approaches are complementary and meets the need to provide complex answers to complex problems. At

the core of anthropological research, with its preference for qualitative techniques, are the units of meaning specific to particular contexts and the interpretation of their significance.

Anthropology acknowledges that there are other ways of accessing knowledge besides the scientific one – for example, art, poetry and literature, and photography. For anthropology, reality is socially and culturally constructed through historical processes. Humans are significant beings, who place a meaning on everything they do, think and say. The research topics are known through the mediation of the subject and his or her language. This does not mean that the subjectivity and inter-subjectivity characteristic of the human and social sciences cannot be scientifically controlled through objectification processes and mechanisms used to understand interpreted reality.

From a critical anthropological perspective, any social reality cannot be understood only through mathematical quantification. Issues such as happiness, sadness, pain and other feelings cannot be reduced to numbers. The whole production of scientific knowledge is exposed to ethical principles and values. The results of a scholarly research project should answer two questions: Whom does it serve? And for what purpose(s)? The research of a scientist

who works on the creation of an atomic bomb and another who works to find a cure for cancer do not share the same ethical values. Therefore, knowledge production should be ethically controlled in its applications and social functions.

The Theoretical and Methodological Approaches of Anthropological Fieldwork

The methods of anthropological research differentiate anthropology from other fields. Methodology is not just a set of research techniques; rather, it is the set of principles that guide research. In anthropology, there are two fundamental methodological principles:

1. The importance of ethnography and of making observations in specific field sites, immersing oneself in the lives of 'Others' with the purpose of understanding them.
2. The comparison one can make between different human groups, time periods, genders and other social and cultural features.

Anthropological knowledge comes from human cultures and groups, rather than from laboratories (Burgess, 1997: 11), and therefore the anthropologist does research on what is most profoundly human: people's daily lives and the meanings associated with these lives. Yet we must recognize that knowledge produced by anthropology is linked to personal and social interests, not only academic and scientific ones, and thus it is important to reflect upon those factors.

The methods of anthropological research are known within the discipline as 'fieldwork' or 'ethnography'. At the same time, ethnography can be considered as a research technique guided by a theory or a discipline of social sciences. Anthropological fieldwork is what differentiates anthropology from other fields, and according to Velasco and Díaz de Rada (1997: 18) we can define this as:

- A methodological situation, which implies 'to be surprised, to have curiosity, to densely describe, to translate and to interpret' the social-cultural reality. In

this situation of meeting others, the researcher deals with their problems, their perceptions, their behaviour and their ways of life in their own terms.

- A process of knowledge based on a period in the field, through which the social-cultural meanings are studied in their own context.
- An experience of inter-cultural contact with the purpose of knowing 'Otherness' and on the basis of the assumption that there are different ways of doing fieldwork.

Therefore, anthropological fieldwork is not just a research technique or an instrument of primary data collection; it is something more. It is a way of inquiring and writing that produces descriptions and records on the ways of life of the studied subjects and of the anthropologist (Kenzin, 1997). Fieldwork is a way of producing knowledge based on the researcher's experience, i.e. a direct contact with reality, a knowledge obtained by repeated observations and/or by proof of ideas or hypotheses (Hessen, 1961).

Fieldwork is also a rite of passage for entering the anthropological tribe, which has its heroes and its myths. One of them was Bronislaw Malinowski (1973), who in the 1920s systematized the ethnographic method of fieldwork, in his work on *The Argonauts of the West Pacific*:

It must be taken into account that natives, by seeing me constantly everyday, are no longer interested, alarmed or self-controlled because of my presence, since I stopped being a disturbing element of the tribal life I intended to study, which had been changed by my first approach, as it always happens in the primitive communities when someone new arrives.

(Malinowski, 1973: 25)

I had to learn to behave and, to a certain extent, I acquired the 'sense' of the good and bad native manners. And it was thanks to this, by knowing how to enjoy their company and to participate in some of their games and amusements, that I started to truly be in contact with the natives; and this is certainly the previous condition to be able to successfully carry out any fieldwork.

(Malinowski, 1973: 26)

Malinowski turned into a sort of founding myth of anthropological fieldwork. His fieldwork was carried out in New Guinea in the 1910s, specifically in the Trobriand Islands (currently the Kiriwina Islands, part of Papua New Guinea), where he lived with the natives for 2 years, learning to coexist with them, their language and their habits. We can extract from Malinowski's work some guiding principles for fieldwork:

- Participate in the social life of the subjects being studied.
- Regard ethnographic data as capable of shaping a theory. The anthropologist knows that the persons about whose lives he or she does research produce 'native theories'.
- Provide a clear and coherent scheme of the social structure.
- Highlight the cultural rules.
- Study the daily phenomena, as well as the extraordinary ones.
- An anthropologist should clarify which data were obtained from his or her direct observations and which data were obtained indirectly (e.g. from others' reports of events).
- The anthropologist should collect reports from the informants, documents and data from his or her own observations of behaviour (this combination of methods sometimes being referred to as triangulation).
- The field diary is a necessary tool, in which must be reported: social agents, actions, spaces, peculiarities, repeated behaviours, etc. The following aspects of the social-cultural life should be taken into consideration: the mentality of the people being studied, native concepts, forms of expression, ideas, feelings, motives, the acts influenced by 'tradition', people's vision of the world. But above all what they feel and think as members of a given community (it is necessary to quote the native statements and to learn the native language).

Malinowski is considered to have invented the ethnographic method (Álvarez Roldán, 1994), thus breaking the former separation

between data collection and theory elaborated by others and turning the anthropologist into a research instrument (Velasco and Díaz de Rada, 1997: 21). Other anthropologists who have decisively contributed to the invention of the ethnographic method were the Americans Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict.

As a methodological process, fieldwork makes the researcher describe, translate, explain and interpret the culture and the studied social relationships, what people say, what people do, what people think should be done, and the confrontation between what people claim they do and what they really do. Ethnographic description should be dense (Geertz, 1987), comprehensive and microscopic (Velasco and Díaz de Rada, 1997: 48), in order to differentiate between several behaviours, spaces and cultural rules, and to better interpret cultural meanings. To interpret is to discover the structural order of the society; it is to capture the – plural – meanings of the social-cultural reality.

Fieldwork follows a dynamic of spatial and cultural displacement in the search for Otherness. Therefore, first the researcher observes others from close by and with a certain intimacy, then does so from a further distance, and therefore builds up an interpretative frame with another lens and another focal length (Velasco and Díaz de Rada, 1997). Obviously there may be different ways of carrying out fieldwork (Velasco and Díaz de Rada, 1997), and hence there is a need to explain the conditions in which the fieldwork and the knowledge production are carried out. This is one of the major contributions of reflexive anthropology: a good way of addressing the theoretical and the practical problems of the research methodology is to walk those paths of the interaction between the researcher and the researched. Those interactions reveal power relationships, spaces where identity roles were negotiated and, in some cases, empowerment of the studied subjects themselves.

Fieldwork is a methodological requirement which consists of going from a distant relationship to the subjects to being in proximity with them, soon returning

from this proximity to the distance, in order to build an interpretation and a comparison between the researcher and the others. Fieldwork can sometimes have a psychological status close to courtship (Buxó Rey, 1995), but it can also cause intensely human anguish, anxieties and fatigues, as reflected in Malinowski's field diary (1989).

Moreover, fieldwork may be considered to be a rite of passage for entering the anthropological tribe, a self-transforming experience, an initiation ritual and a double cultural shock: to become native and to re-become native (Peacock, 1989: 95). As a passing ritual, those who do not perform fieldwork are not, for many anthropologists, considered to be anthropologists, since fieldwork is part of the construction of the anthropologist's professional identity. Fieldwork is conditioned by the position that the anthropologist holds in political, social and economic systems. These agendas, often hidden, should be studied and made conscious in order to better understand the experience of fieldwork. This will help us to better understand the 'Rashomon effect' (Cardín, 1988; Heider, 1988) in anthropology, i.e. during our fieldwork the researcher does not select all the natives' voices but chooses some of them within the complex social reality. To reflect upon the causes of hearing some voices over others forces us to adopt a position of reflection and self-awareness.

Fieldwork is the basis for making comparisons between cultures, and its aim is to arrive at a good representation of the culture being studied. We may state that ethnography today is a 'fusion of horizons', an inter-cultural conversation without impositions (Gadamer, 1978). Ethnography is 'dialogical', a conversation with the Other, with the aim of increasing one's awareness rather than arriving at unanimity or truth. Ethnography is a way of negotiating differences; it is a 'trans-valuation', a way of learning to see ourselves anew after having looked at the others; it is to turn upon ourselves the view previously informed by contact with the 'Other'. It is also a bridge across which information goes from one human group to another; it is a kind of inter-cultural translation (Todorov, 1988: 9–31).

In order for ethnography to be good, it must necessarily be comparative. We may establish four aims as part of the goal of undertaking comparisons:

1. Comparisons between cultures: Us and the Others.
2. Comparisons across time periods, between the past and the present, or also between two historical times.
3. Comparison between two or more theories.
4. Comparison between the ideas held prior to fieldwork and the final ideas developed after the fieldwork is completed.

Comparison is born from diversity and from the need to analyse that diversity. The comparative method implies a search for similarities and differences, and, likewise, something more important: to question ethnocentrism and rationalities that are unique to particular cultures.

Participant Observation as a Technique of Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic observation is a fundamental research technique in anthropology, along with others such as collecting censuses, genealogies, life reports, interviews or audiovisual ethnography. Additionally, ethnographic observation is a research attitude on the part of the anthropologist in the field. It is neither a merely qualitative nor merely quantitative methodology, as it may integrate both approaches. Its methodological principle is cultural relativism: observe others according to their own cultural logics and confront these observations with anthropological theories, categories, concepts, ideas and hypotheses about the problem being studied.

Ethnographic observation may be of two kinds according to Roigé i Ventura *et al.* (1999):

- With non-participant or external observation, the observer is not part of the actions that occur in the scenario, and the observed facts are easier to objectify owing to the distance that is maintained. But this kind of observation has the

disadvantage of having little control over the information and limitations in accessing it.

- In participant observation or internal observation, the observer shares the life of the studied community, institution, organization or human group; he or she participates in their daily lives. In this second kind of observation, the anthropologist assumes a role in the field and apprehends the individuals' rules, values and perceptions, as well as the meanings of the observed behaviours, even though he or she risks inhibiting the studied subjects with his or her presence (the way the researcher's presence conditions the reactions of the subjects being observed is a factor that should systematically be taken into consideration).

The advantages of this technique are the richness and depth of social-cultural information produced in its own context. Data reliability is ensured with valid observation techniques, which will test what people say and think, by comparing these with what they do. Participant observation depends on the researcher's training and experience, but also on his or her rigour and commitment to an involvement with the subjects being studied.

The anthropologist should be accepted in order to be able to interpret the vision of the world from within the group. He or she must also be able to receive a normal and everyday treatment, which is often achieved only by investing a lot of time, inspiring trust and creating social networks of informants. The anthropologist is generally catalogued as a stranger or intruder (e.g. different ways of dressing), because of which the fear of the locals may be great at the beginning. At other times, due to his or her youth, the researcher may experience protectionism and paternalism by those being studied.

Classic fieldwork involves a stay and observation time that lasts for at least 1 year (description of ritual, agricultural and urban life cycles, etc.). Prolonged research produces richer and more reliable data, but applied anthropology has already taken into consideration techniques of 'quick

valuation', which include spending less time in the field.

The big advantage of participant observation is that the researcher creates a text in its context, in its spontaneity. At other times, our presence somehow endangers and makes vulnerable people's spontaneity, by leading them to say what we want to hear. However, participant observation allows for researchers not to force the data; it allows them to develop a better understanding of culture through the awareness of coexistence among cultures. It thus enables access to restricted information. The researcher is the main collection instrument; he or she looks and observes with previously built categories but also with imagination and creativity. It is an exercise of empathy, of putting oneself in the other's shoes in order to better understand what is said (and what is not said), what is done and what is thought.

And although there is not a single model for conducting participant observation, according to Burgess (1997: 21) there are three types of observation:

1. To 'become a native', i.e. when the researcher learns to behave as a 'native' in the situation under study.
2. 'Hidden agent', in which the researcher tries to assume a largely unnoticed behaviour and frequently involves a dissimulated participation.
3. 'Lawyer', which is a situation in which researchers intervene in helping and improving the position of the studied individuals.

A problem with ethnographic observation arises when we apply it to our own social-cultural context. In this case, the objective will be to make strange what is familiar, similar to when we work on another culture, subculture or social group we have to turn the strange into the familiar. Presently, visual anthropology (El Guindi, 2004) allows us to study and re-study the text and the context of a research project. Therefore, it is a critical observation tool, but it is also a way of reporting and interpreting the field and the research problem.

Other kinds of observation are the following (Roigé i Ventura *et al.*, 1999):

- panoramic observation (global): deals with identifying problems and characteristics of the life of a social group;
- selective observation (focused): implies the delimitation of a specific scope, aiming at knowing it more in-depth;
- transversal observation: for example, the observation of organizations in all their complexity; and
- longitudinal observation: to follow a person or a group during a given period of time.

Ethnographic observation is definitely a research technique created by anthropologists and potentially usable by other social researchers. However, the anthropologist uses this technique in a distinctive way, as he or she follows the methodological and theoretical principles that are peculiar to anthropology.

Anthropological Research on Tourism

In this section we will question the relationship between anthropology and tourism. Even though we share the idea that the study of tourism is interdisciplinary (Tribe, 1997) and also comprises a distinctive field of work or arena (Ritchie and Goeldner, 1994; Smith, 1995; Callejo Gallego *et al.*, 2003; Phillmore and Goodson, 2004), we recognize that tourism also may have a monodisciplinary anthropological approach, which presents a coherent integration of specific theoretical, conceptual and methodological approaches (Graburn and Moore, 1994).

Following this line of thought, many anthropologists have reflected upon the relationship between anthropology and tourism. Some, such as Claude Lévi Strauss, who in his famous work *Tristes Tropiques*, confessed that he hated travel and travellers (Crick, 1995). The history of anthropology underlines the importance of missionaries, travellers and adventurers in the ethnographic description of the Otherness. Over time, the anthropologists themselves turned into travellers and became instruments for producing anthropological knowledge. Anthropology was built as a science of

social-cultural diversity based on these travels, which created encounters among people of different backgrounds. However, in this progression, the anthropologist rejected and avoided tourism and tourists (Crick, 1985, 1995), and only later did tourism turn into a legitimated anthropological object of study.

According to Edward Bruner (1989), colonialism, classic ethnography and tourism are phenomena that belong to different historical periods but have their origin in the same social formation and are variants of the expansion of the dominating powers. Criticizing the attitude of anthropologists that has led them to leave tourism out of their ethnographic studies, Crick (1995) stated that 'at the present time, in order to understand the world political economy, one cannot leave out the analysis of international tourism'. In anthropology, tourism, as research object and problem, is increasingly ceasing to be considered as something banal and shallow. It is therefore being less underestimated by academia. The interest of anthropology for the study of tourism is related to four main factors:

- The growth of the tourism industry is a fact that is impossible to ignore (Wallace, 2005). We live in a tourism world, which cannot be neglected as a social-cultural phenomenon. Anthropologists stumble, in their fields, into tourists and locals who produce tourism.
- When analysing cultural contact and its flows, it is difficult to explain culture as a process without considering tourism, as it is more and more present everywhere. We can say that tourism is an activity that consumes cultures (Santana, 2003: 121) and that the tourist is a kind of nomad (Urbain, 1993), carrying culture and causing its circulation.
- Tourism has turned into a producer of new cultural forms (MacCannell, 1992), which means that, in order to understand those new forms, it is necessary to study tourism, which is a good window for observing culture production.
- Tourism and anthropology are two forms of pilgrimage in the search for lost

meaning, wanting to demonstrate that one 'has been there'; both are practised with a round-trip ticket and involve a certain incommodity (Delgado Ruíz, 2002: 52).

And what is anthropology's role in the study of tourism? From our point of view, the contributions of anthropology to the study of tourism have been very positive and are of three specific kinds:

- Methodological: anthropology is distinguished from other disciplines by its focus on fieldwork and the holistic and comparative method (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994; Gmelch, 2004). Anthropological fieldwork is based on participant observation and intensive coexistence with the human groups studied, in order to try to interpret empathically and understand the social-cultural problems addressed.
- Theoretical-conceptual: in order to understand tourism, an objective and functional definition is not enough; rather, it is necessary to ask social agents involved in tourism about the meaning it has for them. Anthropology has predominantly an integrated and subject-oriented approach to the study of tourism (e.g. holism, comparison and cultural relativism).
- The whole set of ethnographies that have helped us to understand such a complex phenomenon now comprise an important reference: the objective of these ethnographies is to interpret the role of tourism (e.g. the role of tourism in the re-invention and production of culture) and to help us better deal with the impacts of tourism, exercising, thus, the applicability of anthropology. These ethnographies are useful for creating guides for responsible tourism and may also turn tourists into better travellers (Chambers, 2005).

One of the most important journals of scientific research on tourism, the *Annals of Tourism Research*, was established by an anthropologist, Jafar Jafari, and approximately 15% of the published articles are

authored by anthropologists (Wallace, 2005). This gives an idea of the weight of anthropology in research on tourism.

Methods of Anthropological Research Applied to Tourism

In the course of the study of tourism, the use of quantitative methods has been predominant (Dann *et al.*, 1988; Walle, 1997: 524). In a way, research has been dehumanized on behalf of a false 'rigour', which has produced, in some cases, sterile and superficial research. In recent decades, and since quantitative methods were alone unable to approach the key problems of the tourism field, qualitative methods have earned increased prestige and legitimacy (Walle, 1997: 526).

The value of both methodological focuses and also their limitations are recognized today, and hence some tourism researchers use mixed methodological approaches according to the research problems they are addressing (see Part II). On this point, Walle (1997: 535) is perfectly right when he states that the field of tourism must recognize the legitimacy of the diversity of research methods.

As previously mentioned, one of the disciplinary contributions of anthropology to the study of tourism is a methodological one. Since tourism is a complex human activity, the theoretical and methodological instruments of anthropology are critical for its holistic understanding. The anthropological methods and techniques are relevant for the following fields of tourism research:

- the study of the resources potentially convertible into tourism products;
- the interpretation of cultural and natural heritage as potential tourism resources and products;
- the analysis of the impacts of tourism on the host communities but also on tourists themselves;
- the role of tourism politics;
- the role of tourism marketing;
- the understanding of mediation in tourism (e.g. images, guides, agency);
- the analysis of tourist visitors;

- the study of tourist memories; and
- the study of tourism as a system that causes the mobilization of persons and the circulation of cultural meanings at a planetary level.

Anthropology is especially useful in the conceptualization and analysis of the social and cultural changes caused by tourism, of the effects and adaptations it leads to. Anthropological methods thus focus better and are more appropriate for investigating the meanings associated with social and cultural processes, the experiences and voices of the participants (Simpson, 1993).

Thanks to their ability to allow researchers to understand complex realities empathically, anthropological methods help especially to enter social universes such as native communities and institutional organizations such as hotels, companies, administrations and so forth. Therefore anthropologists are able to perform readings of proximity and intimacy, allowing us to see the plurality of perspectives and the complexity of tourism activities instead of reducing them to expressions of exoticism and folklore.

An Ethnographic Research Project: Kuna Tourism in Panama

Reflexive ethnography of the project on Kuna tourism

Anthropological research is connected with intellectual and personal concerns but also concrete biographical trajectories. My interest in tourism arose in 1997, soon after having concluded my PhD thesis in anthropology (Pereiro, 2005), when I was working in the Ethnographic Park of Allariz (Galicia, Spain). There I had to deal with tourists who visited the eco-museum and explored its cultural heritage. It was due to them that I was forced to re-read cultural heritage from the point of view of the tourists.

Previously, I had taken a doctoral course, in Santiago de Compostela, with Agustín Santana, a Spanish anthropologist who is an

expert in the anthropology of tourism, and who had alerted me to the importance of tourism as a new mechanism of cultural change and production. In 1998, I started working in the Applied Anthropology Programme of the Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), then delivered on the Miranda do Douro campus, and in 2000 I started to teach the discipline of Cultural Tourism in the Tourism Programme of the UTAD campus in Chaves. The latter activity strongly motivated me to undertake theoretical reflection about tourism and to begin research projects within this area of specialization (see www.utad.pt/~xperez/).

In 2000, I met the Kuna anthropologist Cebaldo de León Inawinapi, and later encouraged him to prepare a research project about ethnic tourism among the Panama Kuna. This was a theme that, in that field, had not been approached in depth since the 1970s.

The initial questions that guided the research project were to investigate the role of tourism as a lever for social and cultural change among an ethnic group that seemed to control its process of tourism development politically. The Kuna from the Republic of Panama are a human group of approximately 60,000 people who live on the Atlantic coast of the country (2500 km² of rainforest), on the 365 islands of the Kuna Yala archipelago and in the urban centres of Panama. The Kuna have been much studied by anthropologists, due to their strong political autonomy and to their resistance to political domination (Pereiro and Inawinapi, 2007). So Cebaldo de León Inawinapi opened up the possibility of starting a project from Europe and of personally experiencing the similarities and the differences between a 'home anthropology' and an 'anthropology out of home', by performing ethnography of the tourism system in the context of the geo-political periphery. Another reason to start the project was the fact that Cebaldo de León Inawinapi was our 'gatekeeper' in the field. This factor would be a determinant during the project, as in the mediation with the Kuna, he mediated in getting the permission to research, in facilitating the contacts with people, in lodging, etc. Therefore, the integration

period was shortened and a better communication with the Kunas was facilitated

In 2003, the research team, with the addition of Ana Rita Lopes, started work on Kuna tourism, in what may be considered as teamwork and a collaborative research with the Kuna (Greenwood, 2000, 2002).

The study developed in several stages. After a brief bibliographical review and the resolution of practical issues, in September 2003 the team started an exploratory field visit, with the purpose of designing a research project to be carried out. In that exploratory visit we visited the city of Panama and the Gardi region, the most touristic area of Kuna Yala (San Blas). Soon we made our first contacts in the field and asked for permission to develop our project from the highest Kuna authorities, represented in the Kuna General Congress (KGC). In the spring of 2004, Ana Rita Lopes went back to the field in order to perform anthropological fieldwork on the impacts of cruise boat tourism on the island of Gardi Suitupu (Lopes, 2004). In the summer of 2004, I made another field visit, with the specific purpose of studying the images that the tourism system had created of the Kuna and their political habits. During that stay, the team developed an intense bibliographical and documental collection, visited tourism projects and conducted exploratory interviews and debates with Kuna tourism business people.

During the summer of 2005, Cebaldo de León Inawinapi made a new field stay, working and analysing the environmental impacts of tourism in Kuna Yala, establishing contacts with the communities and researching their perception of tourism. In 2006, Cebaldo de León Inawinapi and I carried out a thorough study about the supply of tourism products and services in Kuna Yala. We conducted extensive participant observation in all the hotel projects (over 20) and interviewed their promoters, the workers at the hotel projects, the tourists and the sailas (or chiefs) of each community developing tourism. We also built live reports and censuses of tourism projects and of the tourists. Besides that, and still on this stage, we participated in debate groups

with the Kuna Tourist Business Association and the Tourism Commission of the Kuna General Congress; we consulted Kuna specialists and collected documental and statistical material, mainly in the city of Panama.

In 2007, the research team incorporated the Catalan anthropologist Mónica Martínez Mauri, who had already carried out intensive fieldwork in Kuna Yala (Martínez Mauri, 2007). In that year we undertook a field stay that allowed us to enlarge the units of analysis and the areas being explored. We investigated the new tourism supply projects in Kuna Yala, observed and informally interviewed tourists, explored cruise boat tourism, sailboat tourism and travel agencies. Additionally, we organized debate groups with Kuna tourism business owners and conducted interviews with politicians and tourism guides. The project is taking place between 2008 and 2011, thanks to support from the National Office of Science and Technology (SENACYT) of the government of the Republic of Panama. In 2008, the biologist Jorge Ventocilla Cuadros joined the research team; he has already conducted a significant amount of fieldwork among the Kunas (through the Smithsonian Institute of Tropical Investigations). The Kuna scholar Yadixa del Valle has also joined the team, which will enable the training of Kuna students in the area of anthropology and tourism. These two new elements will undoubtedly reinforce the interdisciplinary synergy of the research.

For an Ethnography of the Tourism System

Tourism may be regarded as a system. The present research project has always been thought of as an ethnography of the tourism system that focuses on the relationships between the local and global, even though it is contextualized in the case of a native group, the Kuna, that politically controls its own tourism development. According to this presupposition, we have developed a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995),

which entailed the collection of about 35 h of audio-visual records.

This ethnography followed a mixed and eclectic research approach, yet qualitative predominated over quantitative methods. The adoption of this mixed approach has allowed us to carry out a more in-depth and more historical ethnography of tourism.

This methodological approach was fundamentally a mix of three research strategies (Pujadas Muñoz, 1992; Velasco and Díaz de Rada, 1997; Quivi and Van Campenhoudt, 1998; Roigé i Ventura *et al.*, 1999; Da Silva Ribeiro, 2003; Hernández Sampieri *et al.*, 2006):

- anthropological fieldwork, based on participant observation and audio-visual ethnography;
- oral interviews, debate groups and life history reports; and
- bibliographical and documentary research.

Through this triangulation we were able to understand in ethnographic detail the relevant local-global relationships and also the plurality of perspectives, interpretations and meanings regarding this case of ethnic tourism. In addition, this ethnography is an open work, since the data collected may be studied by other researchers, according to other theoretical and analytical frameworks. Similarly, but not of lesser importance, the Kuna themselves may also analyse and re-interpret the data. In the autumn of 2006, the first ethnographic research report was presented to the Kuna General Congress and to the Kuna Tourism Business Association, and eventually contributed to the redefinition of the politics of Kuna tourism. The methodological strategies adopted in these kinds of projects are useful in medium-to long-range projects, in which there is time to engage in extensive collaborative work in the field.

The advantages of participant observation have already been defended above, but in the present case, it has also allowed us to better understand tourism as an interactive social practice. By articulating intensive observation of specific places with multi-sited observation in an extended area, we

were able to create a basis of comparative information between tourism projects (relating to the local tourism supply), types of tourism, types of host communities and types of tourists. This approach makes it possible to illustrate the diversity existing in tourism to Kuna Yala, to question ethnocentric viewpoints and to build up a basis for comparisons.

The use of audio-visual records enables better subsequent interpretation and analysis, as well as facilitating debate about the research problem with other researchers. A documentary in production will allow us to return the knowledge produced to the subjects studied.

The recorded interviews were a means of objectifying and ethnographically documenting the supply side of tourism and understanding the perspectives and voices about Kuna tourism. They were especially useful for analysing the different points of view in the conflicts between the Kuna and the state of Panama or between the Kuna and foreign researchers.

It is also worth stressing the application of life history reports about the business people involved in Kuna tourism. This technique made it possible to better study the history of Kuna tourism from the perspectives of the protagonists, who are the promoters of this industry. This technique also allowed us to improve the assessment of the origin of tourism projects and the reasons that have led the Kuna to become producers of tourism. The analysis of documents is required in these kinds of research projects: for example, the analysis of newspapers has contributed to the production of a historical ethnography, which has helped to analyse diachronically tourism processes and to contextualize the problems being examined better. Notwithstanding this, the research faced a number of constraints:

- Financial limitations. The project started with no financial support whatsoever and required a strong personal investment by the research team. Over time, we managed to get recognition and support for the presentation of partial research outcomes.

- Permission to undertake the research. To research in Kuna Yala implies asking for permission from the Kuna General Congress, which generally operates relatively slowly, made easier in our case by the role of Cebaldo de León Inawinapi, highly accredited among the Kuna authorities. Besides that, each one of the 44 Kuna communities that inhabit the Kuna Yala may, and have the right, to refuse to accept the permissions granted by the Kuna General Congress, and thus to research in this context means to negotiate and to renegotiate. Audio-visual records cannot be made without permission, and this demands much ethical care and collaborative attention.
- Learning the Kuna language. For research of this kind, it is necessary to know the indigenous language, which allows access to the social and cultural universes of the communities from the inside. Spanish represents, in many Kuna communities, a kind of foreign language.
- Adaptation to the local culture and climate. The adaptation to the local food and the physical and mental adaptation to the islands and to the jungle are some of the accommodation processes needed in this kind of research.
- Mistrust. The researcher's social identities are a very important subjective factor in the process of knowledge production. In our case, to be male, European and 'white' has conditioned the entrance into the field and the winning of the Kunas' trust, as well as that of the tourists. The author's ethnic identity helped in this case, as the fact of being a 'Galician' (from Galicia, a differential ethnic community of the Spanish state) helped to establish bonds with the Kunas, who distrust the 'Spanish', to whom the stereotype of imperialist is attributed. On the other hand, while carrying out fieldwork in the city of Panama among politicians, travel agents and other public institutions, 'the magic of the white man' (perception of the superiority of the European) worked towards doors opening more quickly.

Applications of the Anthropology of Tourism

In the field of tourism, the distance between theoretical anthropology and applied anthropology may become very small, and thus there is space for research that may have a strong, sometimes immediate, social impact. This reflection causes unrest in anthropologists who think of their work as an exclusively theoretical exercise separated from anthropological practice and praxis. However, theory and practice, theory and application (applicability), and theory and implication are closer than anthropologists sometimes admit. Whatever the role the anthropologist adopts – researcher, consultant, advisor, mediator, guide, tourist, professor, student, manager, tourist promoter, etc. – the problem of the relationship between theory and practice will always be present.

In fact, during our work, it was interesting and gratifying to observe how our research project started from the beginning to interest the Kuna communities themselves. The Kuna Tourism Business Association, the Panama Institute of Tourism (IPAT), the Usdup School of Agro-ecotourism and some travel agencies all saw the benefits the project could bring them in terms of training, advisory, recommendations, tourism publicity, strategic consultancy, etc. In any case, the research purpose was to know, investigate and produce knowledge. Obviously, the same knowledge production is achieved within the framework of social and political relations, in the face of which we tried to establish a critical lens, allowing a better understanding of the research problem.

The research was a guide for Kuna authorities and business people involved in tourism to better rethink and redefine the future of tourism in Kuna Yala. Therefore our first report was used by the Kuna in community-wide conferences on tourism and in their internal debates. Although it is not the only source of change, tourism is one of motors for the social-cultural change that may cause positive and negative effects on the local communities and tourists. Therefore anthropological research on tourism

systems may help to identify and to correct possible negative effects and it may likewise contribute to the building up of responsible tourism from the social and environmental point of view (Gascón and Cañada, 2005).

We also wish to highlight how the results of our scientific research project had a reciprocal impact, i.e. our work did not just work as a mirror for the Kunas but also for the Europeans and other Westerners. The reception on the part of academia in the West was very positive, and this project was awarded the first prize in tourism research by the International Tourism Fair in Madrid (FITUR) in 2007 (Pereiro and Inawinapi, 2007), as well as another award by the National Geographic Society. In 2008, SENACYT granted us specific funding to carry out a strategic study of tourism in Kuna Yala, and thus guaranteed the continuity of the project. This recognition allows for several readings, but one of them is that the post-Fordist tourism system itself is interested in fragmenting the market and in finding new alternative destinations for the new niches of tourism demand. Even though this was not previously foreseen, our research work meets those interests.

Erve Chambers (2005: 27) asked whether an anthropology of tourism might help us become better travellers. Obviously, this kind of research, if built upon the participation of the communities involved in

tourism and in following specific ethical principles, may help tourists to become better and more responsible travellers, to unveil the interests and strategies of many tourism systems and to plan more efficient tourism strategies. We believe, therefore, from our experience, that the work of the anthropologist who does research on tourism may play an important mediating role with the actors involved in processes associated with tourism development.

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