THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BACKPACKER TOURISM CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION IN COLOMBIA

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For my family.

Abstract

Backpacker tourism has been an increasing phenomenon since the 1960s (Cohen 1973; Hampton 2013), and many Less Developed Countries (LDCs) are now favourite destinations for backpackers. This backpacker tourism development raises questions about the effects it has on the host communities as well as on the backpackers themselves However, the impact of backpacker tourism development on the power relations between the actors of this development, i.e. the backpackers, the host communities with their businesses, and the governmental actors, have been little explored.

This thesis examines the relationship between backpacker tourism development and the power relations between the backpackers, the host communities with their businesses, and the governmental actors in Colombia. Adopting a broad Political Economy (PE) approach, the thesis investigates the backpacker tourism development in two rural communities, one a long-standing backpacker tourism destination, the other one a more recent development.

The study includes the three main actors of tourism development: the backpackers as tourism consumers, the businesses catering to them as tourism producers, and the governmental actors influencing backpacker tourism development. It analyses the actors' social, cultural and political embeddedness within their respective communities. The thesis explores how these three main actors of backpacker tourism development interact with each other, how they are interlinked in the two researched communities on the three types of embeddedness mentioned above, and how they affect and are affected by backpacker tourism development.

The thesis key contribution is the theoretical framework. It investigates the interaction between consumption and production, as advocated by (Ateljevic 2000), while also anchoring the three actors in the social, cultural and political structures they act within. It combines two existing frameworks into a new, holistic one: The first one is a framework by Ferguson (2011), focussing on small-scale actors in rural communities, and also on the consumption patterns of consumers from LDCs, in this case on Latin American backpackers travelling within Latin America (Colombia). The second component of the framework is Mosedale's (2011) theoretical framework that examines the embeddedness

of the actors of tourism development on three different types: their structural embeddedness into social structures and networks, their cultural embeddedness, and their political embeddedness on a local, regional and national level. The thesis' new framework therefore provides one answer to the call for more theorisation, both in tourism studies (see Bianchi 2009; Hannam 2002; Tribe 2006) and in PE (see Britton 1982). It further focusses on small-scale actors, in this case backpacker tourism Small and Medium–Sized Enterprises (SMEs) instead of Transnational Enterprises (TNCs) as often investigated in tourism and PE studies (e.g. Britton 1982; Freitag 1994).

The research aim was addressed in an ethnographic field study, consisting of mainly interviews (n=53) with backpackers, backpacker tourism business owners, and policy makers in two different fieldwork locations in Colombia. Additional data was collected through participant observation, policy document analysis, and other supporting methods such as mapping exercises and the analysis of online and offline travel materials.

The findings show that backpacker tourism development often reinforced unequal power relations that were prevalent within the communities and on a global scale. For example, on the production side, this includes issues such as the access to knowledge of the backpacker market by local business owners, resulting in foreign business owners with travel experience having more knowledge power over the locals competing in the same market. On the consumption side, many backpackers from developed countries possessed more financial power to travel for prolonged periods of time in comparison to their Latin American counterparts, who travelled for less time or had to work while travelling. Furthermore, the local government's involvement in tourism development seemed to be vital for a more successful execution of backpacker tourism within the communities, with a lack of involvement leading to a power vacuum in one community that was filled by shadow industries.

The theoretical contribution of the thesis include that it brings in different voices by including different actors of tourism development from different national and social backgrounds. The inclusiveness of all actors and the structures they work within into one framework allows for a more accurate analysis of the processes of tourism development and its implicit power relations that help to shape backpacker tourism development. It also gives a better indication of why these processes happen the way they do, and how the

actors work within the given social, cultural and political structures. The new framework and the analysis could then lead to a more thorough and integrated analysis, considering all actors and their influence upon tourism development and on each other.

The analysis of the findings also propose some practical implications for tourism businesses and policy makers, such as an upscale shift in the backpacker tourism market, artesano backpackers bridging the gap between tourism producers and consumers, and the need for the local and regional government to invest in the education of their citizens to enable them to successfully participate in the (backpacker) tourism business.

Keywords: *tourism development, tourism production and consumption, Political Economy, backpacker tourism, Colombia*

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List of Abbreviations

ANATO	Asociación Colombiana de Agencias de Viajes y Turismo
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística
DFID	Department For International Development
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FUPAD	Fundación Panamericana para el Desarrollo
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPE	International Political Economy
IT	Institutional Theory
LDC	Less Developed Country
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PE	Political Economy
PPT	Pro Poor Tourism
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprise
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Travelling as a backpacker has been common since the early 1960s (Hampton 2013). To this day there are many popular backpacker travel routes throughout Europe, the infamous hippy trail through Asia, and the Gringo Trail through Latin America. The sheer number of these independent travellers worldwide, from both developed and less developed countries (LDCs) would suggest that there is a substantial body of literature on this form of tourism[1]. Conversely, even though increasing numbers of academic studies into this tourism sub-sector have been conducted in the past 20 years, there are still areas that are not well understood. Backpacker tourism and its effects on host communities being an understudied topic might then in turn have also led to some lack of understanding by governments and tourism planners, especially in LDCs (Hampton 2013; Wilson 1997). Although backpacker tourism is common throughout many LDCs, there is a lack of data in many regions, such as in Latin America. With communities having been popular destinations for backpackers for some decades and others being recently “discovered” by backpackers, this tourism development[2] raises questions of its effects on the host communities and on the backpackers. While there have been studies on the economic effects of backpacker tourism (e.g. Hampton 1998; 2003, Scheyvens 2002), the effects of backpacker tourism development on the power relations within the actors of the development, the backpackers, the host communities with their businesses, and the governmental actors, have been little explored. This thesis addresses some of these shortcomings, analysing backpacker tourism development in two rural communities, one a long-standing backpacker tourism destination, the other one a more recent development, and how it affected, and was affected by, the power relations between these actors of tourism development.

In this first chapter, the rationale and significance of the research give an insight into the

[1] While there is no consensus on a definition on tourism (Panosso Neito 2009), this thesis broadly follows the definition by the UNWTO (1995): "Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

[2] Tor the purpose of this thesis, tourism development encompasses the production and consumption of tourism products, and the changes and growth of tourism in a place.

context and background of this thesis, highlighting some of the issues raised in previous research on tourism and development, on the political economy of tourism, and on backpacker tourism. It then sets out the research aims and questions, before defining some of the key terms used throughout. Lastly, an outline of the thesis chapters is given to conclude the chapter.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The thesis' aim is to explore the relationship of the actors of backpacker tourism production and consumption, through a broad political economy lens, in two rural communities in Colombia. The study includes the three main actors of backpacker tourism development: the backpackers as tourism consumers, the businesses catering to them as tourism producers, and the governmental actors influencing backpacker tourism development. It analyses the actors' social, cultural and political embeddedness within their respective communities[3]. The embeddedness therein represents the structures within which the actors operate. The main research question addressed by this study therefore is:

1. Adopting a political economy approach, what is the nature of the relationship between tourism development and the power relations between the three main actors of backpacker tourism development, i.e. the tourism businesses, the tourists and the governmental actors?

To comprehend the context of the power relations between the three actors, the thesis reflects upon the following sub-questions:

a) How do the power relations between the three actors influence the backpacker tourism development? Who or what drives this development?

b) To what extent does the social embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?

[3] Chapter 3 gives a full definition of the three types of embeddedness.

c) To what extent does the cultural embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?

d) To what extent does the political embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis investigates how the three main actors of backpacker tourism development interact with each other, and how they are interlinked in the two researched communities on the three types of embeddedness mentioned above. The research is led by the analysis of backpacker tourism consumption and tourism production. Additionally, the analysis of tourism-specific and tourism-related policies reveals how tourism development is supported from the government perspective.

For the backpackers, the research is guided by sub-classifications similar to Sørensen's (2003) or Westerhausen's (2002) ethnographies (e.g. short-term/long-term; working/not working). Furthermore, the Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers are assessed and compared in regards of their preferences, e.g. for destinations and activities, as well as their length of trip, which might all be indicators for their access to finances and to travel in general. This relates back to the main research question, as this sub-classification allows to uncover possible differences of the nature of the relationships between the different groups of backpackers themselves, as well as between the different groups of backpackers and the other two main actors.

On the production side of backpacker tourism it is assessed what impact backpacker tourism has on the local economy and community in general. This includes direct effects such as employment generation through tourism and indirect effects such as education, forward and backward linkages into the local economy (supply chains). It will be determined where the entrepreneurs got the idea and the capital to initiate their business (see (Jarvis and Peel 2012). These findings not only indicate access to financial means, but also show insights into the local formal and informal (capital) market. Furthermore, business networks and the relationship between the businesses and their competitors are

assessed to gain a deeper understanding of the local and regional tourism structure.

The findings show the relationships between the backpackers, the businesses and also the local, regional and national policy makers, and how power shapes these relationships. In addition, to address issues of power and power relations, this thesis assesses within which structures and with what agency the participants of tourism development act, i.e. in this case the backpackers, the entrepreneurs and policy makers. This includes the evaluation of the backpacker tourism development in Colombia, in particular within two different communities in different regions in the country.

1.3 Justification and Contribution

For many Less Developed Countries (LDCs) tourism is an area of major economic importance. On one hand it serves to earn foreign exchange (Brohman 1996; Hall 2007; Mowforth and Munt 2003; Reid 2003), on the other, it is also a major contributor to GDP and employment. For 2014, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) calculated the contribution of tourism to the worldwide GDP to be 9%, and that one in 11 jobs is tourism-related employment (World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) 2014). These numbers are even higher in many LDCs that serve as popular tourism destinations, and can be as high as 40% GDP contribution for countries such as the Seychelles (Lee *et al.* 2015).

Although tourism has been widely researched in various fields, Pearce (1989) criticised the lack of engagement of the development literature with tourism in LDCs. Telfer (2002) pointed out the necessity to link the two as development paradigms have, and are, influencing tourism. Several scholars such as Britton (1991), Hannam (2002) and Tribe (2000; 2010) have called for further theorisation in tourism research. While many development theorists would develop frameworks, studies on tourism would often concentrate on more practical problems[4]. Hannam (2002, p. 227) argued that "[by] developing more sophisticated theoretical frameworks we may actually hear better the voices of people involved in processes of tourism development." This thesis therefore contributes to further the link between tourism and development studies by addressing some of these shortcomings in the research questions and the theoretical framework put

[4] For a discussion on tourism as an academic discipline and its division between practical and theoretical studies see also Tribe (1997, 2006).

forward.

Furthermore, it is not fully understood how tourism development progresses, in particular, who drives the development and what influences the development. This thesis adopts a political economy approach to better understand the power relations between the tourism actors and how they influence backpacker tourism development. Moreover, this thesis further advances the political economy (PE) literature on tourism and development, as there is a still a lack of more current debate on tourism and PE (e.g. Bianchi 2002; Bramwell 2011; Britton 1991; 1982; 1980; Dieke 2000; Duffy 2006b; 2006a; 2000; Mosedale 2015; 2011). Political economy concerns itself in this context with the question of who are the drivers of tourism development. Economic development and political decision-making are closely interlinked and should therefore be analysed together (Sen 2001). As both Tosun (2001) and Britton (1982) have pointed out, tourism as a strategy for economic development is not only popular in LDCs, but also a highly political choice, and that is further discussed in the literature review.

By combining these two notions, tourism development and its political economy, this thesis develops a new theoretical framework. The thesis combines two existing frameworks, one by Mosedale (2011) and one by Fergusson (Ferguson 2011; 2010). Mosedale's (2011) theoretical framework of embeddedness addresses the broader issues of structure and agency and the relationship between the economic, the cultural and social sphere, and politics, whereas Ferguson's (2011, 2010) notion of regionalism represents the basis for an analysis of small, local actors and their role in a global and regional economy.

One aspect of this thesis is the focus on small actors[5] in tourism instead of large TNCs as typically research on the political economy of tourism is carried out on only these large actors (e.g. Britton, 1982, 1991). This sole focus on just the large players has been criticised as a shortcoming of PE literature (Ferguson 2011; Williams 2004). According to the OECD (2005) the vast majority of tourism businesses are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). It is therefore important to analyse how those small actors are integrated into the global tourism phenomenon to understand how local groups and communities, and in that relation also peripheral rural areas, adapt, or fail to adapt, to

[5] This thesis follows the definition of SME from the European Commission from 2003, where medium businesses generally provide employment for less than 250 people, small businesses less than 50 people, and micro-enterprises less than 10 people (European Commission 2014).

changes in global economic development.

Additionally, another shortcoming Ferguson (2011) pointed out is that if PE literature has focused on consumption, often studied consumption in the developed world, for example in recent years on Fair Trade product consumption (see for example Goodman 2004; Raynolds, Murray and Leigh Taylor 2004). Ferguson (2011, p. 368) addressed this issue in relation to consumption and social reproduction in Central America, and found that "[c]hanges in the political economy of consumption have led to both a rupturing and a reinforcement of inequalities" in the studied rural communities. It is therefore useful to study further the consumption habits of people in the less developed world to analyse if the reduction and sustaining of inequalities, also regarding power relations, is a reoccurring phenomenon. This could be done in relation to different countries, rural and urban places as well as sectors. In this case, this thesis focusses on Latin American backpackers travelling in rural Colombia, while also looking at the local, Colombian and international tourism entrepreneurs operating their business in those rural communities in Colombia.

Dieke (2013), p. 623) suggested that only the analysis of both tourism production and tourism consumption can provide data to forecast tourism scenarios, as their "features are […] inextricably linked, each being essential to, and having an impact on, the development of the other, resulting in a number of social changes to, and the nature of, the [region's] tourism industry." Hence this thesis addresses both in one study.

Many studies on tourism consumption have primarily focussed on tourists from the developed countries, such as Shaw et al. (2000) on British tourists and Fleischer and Rivlin (2009) on Israeli tourists. There are studies on intraregional and domestic tourism in developing countries (Belisle and Hoy 1980; Ghimire 2013, 2001; Rogerson 2004; Rogerson and Kiambo 2007; Weaver 2002; Wu, Zhu and Xu 2000), however, they are spatially and temporally quite limited. Therefore, more studies on consumption within LDCs seem to be necessary as those countries are part of the global production and consumption cycle of tourism, hence the additional focus on Latin American backpackers travelling in Colombia in this study.

Furthermore, even though tourism is an important economic factor for many LDCs, backpacker tourism is often ignored or even actively discouraged by governments,

favouring high-spending tourists (Hampton 1998; Scheyvens 2002), therefore influencing the development of backpacker tourism. Visser (2004) argued that government planners see conventional international mass tourism as the best way for rapid development. In their eyes, tourists who can afford luxury holidays will spend more money in the country (Scheyvens, 2002). However, the validity of this argument is assessed in the following literature review. This thesis will focus on backpacker tourists as they frequent SMEs rather than TNC-owned businesses. Furthermore, they usually have a higher economic impact on the poorer part of the population participating in tourism and distribute their spending over a greater geographical area than conventional mass tourists, often also into rural, less developed areas (Hampton 1998; Scheyvens 2002). Lastly, backpacker tourism seems to be less enclavic in its development, allowing locals to participate more easily (Hampton 2003; Hampton 1998). Although there are also enclavic backpacker spaces such as Khao San Road in Bangkok, the businesses are primarily SMEs and owned by nationals from their own country (Ateljevic and Doorne 2005; Cohen 2006; Howard 2007).

Even though the past two decades have seen a significant increase in research on backpacker tourism, especially in South East Asia and Australia (e.g. Hampton, 2010, 2003; Hannam and Ateljevic, 2007; Hannam and Diekmann, 2010; Richards and Wilson, 2004), there is still little research on the socio-economic impact of backpackers, and if so, it is usually focused on Western backpackers travelling in those LDCs. Since this thesis is also looking at consumption in LDCs by people from LDCs, it analyses the differences between Latin American backpackers and Western backpackers travelling in Latin America. Furthermore, since the average GDP on the whole continent has been growing (World Bank 2016), the socio-economic status of some groups in Latin America are developing who might have the desire to travel, so it can be seen as a sector with growing future potential.

Moreover, apart from Brenner and Fricke (2007) and Broocks and Hannam (2016), case studies on backpackers in Latin America are still rare although there is a thriving backpacker tourism industry, especially along a popular route called “the Gringo Trail” linking South and Central America. Hampton (2013) noted the lack in data on backpacker tourism in South America, although it is a key growing area with significant tourism flows[6].

[6] No data could be found on backpacker numbers, flows or entrepreneurs along the “Gringo Trail”. Furthermore, no data could be obtained on the number of backpackers in Colombia.

This, however, is a common problem in less developed countries, and has been noted by scholars such as Ghimire (2013). The booming backpacker tourism sector can only be approximated at this point by observing the backpacker tourism infrastructure such as hostels, cafes and specialized tour operators in these countries (see for example Thieme 2012). Therefore, this thesis provides more data from this part of the world to contribute to understanding the backpacker phenomenon globally and its significance for tourism development.

Additionally, Goeldner (2005) specifically called for the inclusion of race, nationality, gender and class in research into tourism. This more inclusive approach would reduce representation bias in tourism studies and contribute to more equality and justice in tourism research (Pritchard, Morgan and Ateljevic 2011). At the moment most tourism research is carried out by Western academics, often with the focus of the research placed either in the West or on Western tourists[7]. This thesis aims to include voices from LDCs by setting the research in an LDC and focussing on backpackers from that region, in this case Latin America.

Research on certain kinds of backpacker nationalities has already been carried out (Maoz 2007; Reichel, Fuchs and Uriely 2009 on Israeli backpackers), however, mostly focusing on Western backpackers. In the past years a few studies have emerged on Asian backpackers travelling in Asia. Teo and Leong (2006) focused their study on race, gender and backpacker culture, whereas Ong and du Cros (2012) conducted a cyber-ethnographic study of Chinese backpackers travelling to Macau; furthermore du Cros (2014) identified different types of backpacker travel pattern in Chinese travellers; Chen et al. (2014) segmented Chinese backpackers by their travel motivations. These studies, although mainly focussing on cultural topics, might provide a useful basis for expanding inquiry into further continents. At the moment there is only one study focusing only on Latin American backpackers in Latin America known to the author, research by Broocks and Hannam (2016) on Latin American artisan backpackers. This thesis therefore adds to close the existing gap in the literature and initiate a discussion on this topic in a Latin American context and contribute to the wider literature on tourism.

[7] However, there is a growing number of non-Western tourist academia, specifically from China and other Asian countries.

Additionally to nationality, the research of this thesis investigates the characteristics, such as socio-economic status, of who participates in tourism, on one hand as a consumer, the Latin American backpackers, and on the other hand on the production side providing services for those travellers. The findings will be important to show if backpacker tourism can hold up to its promise to low entrance barriers for locals on the production side as in Hampton's (1998, 2003) studies in Indonesia, which can contribute to poverty alleviation. It also assesses if there are lower entrance barriers for regional travellers to travel as backpackers rather than mass tourists due to financial reasons.

Colombia as a research location provides a useful case study. The Colombian Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism has identified tourism as a strategy for economic development, with tourism currently being the third biggest contributor to the national GDP (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo Colombia 2014). There is already a thriving backpacker tourism scene in the country, even though it has received little academic attention. In 2010, Colombia was voted into the Top 3 backpacker destinations by Lonely Planet readers (Lonely Planet 2010), one of the most popular and influential backpacker publications. Still, after Colombia's recent history[8] international tourism has only begun developing since the mid-/late 2000s. It is therefore interesting to observe tourism development at this point in time, while it is still at a relatively early stage, and this might generate better insights into the parallel development of a backpacker destination and international mass tourism development at the same time.

Furthermore, since the topic not only opens up the discussion on who is driving tourism development in these communities, but also the socio-economic significance of backpacker tourism in a rural context, the findings are not only academically interesting, but also policy relevant for Colombia and for other LDCs. While the findings might not be completely transferable to other regions or countries due to different geographical, historical and cultural contexts, they still indicate possible similar developments in other LDCs. It is reasonable to assume that they might be useful to Colombia's neighbouring countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela that share a similar culture due to their

[8] Colombia is working on rebranding their image in an international context to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The Colombian Chamber of Commerce ProExport/ProColombia launched a country campaign called "Colombia is passion" with a tourism sub-campaign called "Colombia- The only risk is wanting to stay" in the late 2007, including TV spots in mayor TV networks such as CNN. It was an internationally acclaimed campaign and a follow up campaign was launched in late 2013, called "Colombia is Magic Realism".

language and predominant religion, geographical features like the Andes and coastlines, and similar colonial histories as formerly part of the same European empire. Also, in the past century and still ongoing, Peru is fighting similar battles against violence and drug trafficking. All of these above mentioned factors continue to influence the tourism development in these countries.

After outlining the context of this thesis, the following section discusses the working definitions of terminology that is used throughout the thesis.

1.4 Working Definitions

The aim of the thesis is to assess the nature of the relationships between the three main tourism actors, and within that process, evaluate how the power relations between them influence backpacker tourism development. Therefore it is necessary to define the three actors as well as what is referred to 'power' throughout this thesis.

1.4.1 The three main actors of tourism development

In order to define the backpacker tourism businesses, it is essential to firstly outline what it is that makes a backpacker. Only then it can be made clearer what constitutes a backpacker tourism business. Lastly, governmental actors influencing backpacker tourism development are defined.

Backpackers have been academically studied since the 1970s, when E. Cohen (1973) referred to them as 'drifters': non-institutionalised young, low-budget travellers searching for novelty and authenticity. Further academic studies have then called these types of travellers 'nomads' (E. Cohen 1973), 'wanderers' (Vogt 1976) and long-term 'budget travellers' (Riley 1988). Since the 1990s, 'backpacker' has been established as the general terminology to study this phenomenon (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Pearce 1990).

Even though Sørensen (2003) doubts that there can be a definition for 'backpackers' as it is rather a social construct and based on an individual's perception, there have been many attempts at definitions over time. However, there is no agreed definition on what constitutes a backpacker. Originally introduced into the academic literature by Pearce

(1990)[9], the term ‘backpackers’ referred to long-term travellers who use this travel style to postpone immediate life-choices such as career and marriage. Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) argued that Pearce (1990) was also the first to recognise the shift of backpackers being seen as a ‘de-marketing label’ to becoming an attractive market segment themselves. Backpacker were then studied in more detail and defined in more depth. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) proposed that backpackers share characteristics such as a low level of organisation in their travel plans, the use of budget facilities, and a high level of host and guest interaction. Many backpacker researchers such as Hampton (2013), Hottola (1999), Loker-Murphy (1996) and Maoz (2007) pointed out that backpackers are not a homogenous group. Hottola (1999) and Loker-Murphy (1996) suggested sub-classifications of backpackers according to their motivations, but Hottola (1999) also had reservations about creating a typology of people, as they are living beings, and she therefore doubted the usefulness of typologies in general.

Sørensen (2003) argued that the backpacker phenomenon is constantly changing and evolving. E. Cohen (2004) mirrored this sentiment and suggested that backpackers are nowadays more institutionalised, becoming more like tourists rather than travellers regarding their travel style (see also Spreitzhofer 1998). He concluded that there is a rift between their identity as backpackers and their travel practice (E. Cohen, 2004; see also Binder 2004; Wilson and Richards 2008). The constant change in the phenomenon is also reflected in a differentiation of travel styles (Richards and Wilson 2004b). For example, the flashpacker emerged as a sub-group of the backpacker phenomenon (Hannam and Diekmann 2010; Paris 2010; Richards 2006). Hannam and Diekmann (2010) define flashpackers as generally older backpackers with a higher disposable income who are often travelling with expensive technological equipment such as laptops or digital cameras. Jarvis and Peel (2010) see flashpackers simply as upmarket backpackers. This thesis follows this train of thought. As most backpackers typically travel with digital equipment such as smartphones nowadays, this thesis defines flashpackers as upmarket backpackers, often with a higher disposable travel income.

Apart from this upmarket shift of some backpackers, there is also evidence for the opposite development. S. Cohen (2011) observed ‘lifestyle travellers’, a sub-group that is not on a

[9] The term ‘backpacker’ had, however, been already used, for example by Lonely Planet, since the early 1980s (Hampton, 2013).

finite backpacking trip, but rather experiences backpacking as a way of life. These travellers could be seen as similar to the Latin American *artesanos* that were studied by Broocks and Hannam (2016), who additionally work by selling handicrafts while travelling. This group is also considered in this thesis.

In order to set parameters for this thesis, a containment of what constitutes a backpacker is necessary. Two approaches are combined for the definition used in this thesis to address the rift between identity and practise as pointed out earlier by E. Cohen (2004). The first part of the definition is centred around the understanding of the travel practice. Backpackers are independent travellers who travel on a budget, and often for prolonged periods of time, often carrying their possessions in a backpack during their self-organised trip (Hampton, 2013; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). Secondly, echoing Sørensen (2003) and O`Reilly (2006), they are the travellers who refer to themselves as backpackers or did not disagree with being called a backpacker by the researcher.

For the lack of a more refined terminology, for this thesis the term backpacker will be mainly used as a blanket term, recognising that backpackers are not a homogenous group[10]. However, as a result of the findings, two more distinctions are being made later on in the thesis in chapter 7.

The businesses included in this thesis are those who primarily cater to backpackers as defined above. The businesses that supply services to the backpackers are organised as SMEs rather than part of TNCs. These include: hostel accommodation, often with shared facilities between backpackers; cafes and (budget) restaurants that serve them food (they might sometimes not be indistinguishable from restaurants serving regular tourists); and activities that are geared towards backpackers, such as adventure activities.

Lastly, the third main actors in the backpacker tourism development are the governmental actors. These include the governmental actors on three scales (national, regional and local) as well as other related stakeholders who might influence the tourism policies made by these governmental actors. For the purpose of the theoretical framework of this thesis, the Chamber of Commerce is included into this third group of tourism actors. It is

[10] In a recent paper, Dayour et al. (2017) called for a reconceptualization of the term ‘backpacker’ to produce more comparable data. However, if a clear-cut definition is actually possible, remains questionable.

recognised that they might also have an economic motivation, rather than just a political one; however, due to the governmental organisation of Colombia, where the national Chamber of Commerce, ProColombia, is sub-ordinate to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (see also Section 4.5.1), in this thesis they are grouped within the governmental actors.

1.4.2 What is power?

There are many discussions on power, and it is a highly contested concept[11]. Weber (1947), p. 152) in his seminal work on social and economic organisations defined power as "the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them". The usage of 'power' in this thesis also includes Foucault's (1978) notion of power as a relationship rather than an entity. Cheong and Miller (2000) argued that tourism studies would need to move away from thinking of tourists having the power over the dominated locals at the destination. Instead, power relations would function in both directions, from guests to hosts, and from hosts to guests (Cheong and Miller, 2000). However, this thesis does not have the scope to delve deeper into the broad sociological and political discussions surrounding the concept of power. Instead, this thesis mainly refers to three types of power within tourism: knowledge power, financial power and bargaining power.

Concerning knowledge power, this concept is also based on Foucault (1980, p. 52) who claimed that the "exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power", hence creating the concept of 'power-knowledge'. It could therefore be argued that power and knowledge are linked (Hall 2006). In tourism studies, power and knowledge have mainly been studied regarding knowledge creating in academia and its power relations (e.g. Tribe 2006; Jamal and Hollinshead 2001). Baggio and Cooper (2010), while not explicitly looking at the power of holding knowledge, studied the knowledge transfer within tourism destinations. For this thesis, knowledge power combines these two notions. It refers to the knowledge held by groups or people, for example from tourism experience and the knowledge derived from it, and the power that could come with having that knowledge.

[11] For a philosophical and sociological discussion, see for example Foucault (1980) and Weber (1947). In tourism studies, see for example Cheong and Miller (2000), Church and Coles (2006), Hall (1994) and Shaw and Williams (2002).

Financial power, then, signifies the power a person or a group might hold over another group due to their financial situation (Seabrooke 2006). This could go in both directions, meaning either having the disposition over financial capital, or not having disposition over (much) financial capital, and influences the power relations both ways.

Lastly, bargaining power has been studied in tourism in various ways. For example, Buhalis (2001) investigated the bargaining power between tourists, hotels and travel agents in the Mediterranean. In a more recent study, Buhalis and Zoge (2007) analyse the influence of the internet has had on the bargaining power of tourists. Lastly, Ashley, Boyd and Goodwin (2000), within the pro-poor concept, found that small-scale tourism producers possessed no bargaining power with investors. While there seems to be no formal definition within tourism studies, this thesis bases the definition of bargaining power loosely on Porter's (2008; 1979) supplier power and buyer power. It means that usually either the supplier (the tourism producer) or the buyer (the tourist) exercise power over the other through, for example, the price or the quality of the offered tourism product.

After clarifying the terms used throughout this thesis, the last section of the introductory chapter gives an overview of the organisation of the thesis and the contents of its individual chapters.

1.5 Thesis Overview

After setting out the research aims and the research questions, this section outlines the structure of this thesis. The thesis is organised in six main chapters. The next chapter deals with the literature review, and its following chapter explains the theoretical framework in detail. The fourth chapter is concerned with the methodology chapter. The following two chapters report the findings, while the last chapter discusses them. Lastly, the thesis concludes with a final chapter.

Firstly, the research is situated in the literature. The literature review looks at the relevant tourism and development literature since the 1960's. It then examines the role of SMEs in tourism research, and how structure and agency has been researched in the tourism literature. Lastly, it looks at alternative tourism and the discussions around its role as

alternative markets and the addressing of inequalities.

Following the literature review, the theoretical framework is the focus of the third chapter. It explains the two main frameworks that make up the new, theoretical framework of this thesis. Furthermore, the three main actors and their role in the framework are clarified. The chapter also describes the three types of embeddedness, and how they relate to the three main actors of tourism.

Chapter 4 concerns itself with the methodology of the thesis. It starts off by explaining the philosophical stance, before arguing for the ethnographic approach that this study was executed under. The methods for data collection are explained, and the chapter concludes by describing the data analysis process.

Chapter 5 and chapter 6 of this thesis report the findings of the data analysis. The chapters are separated by fieldwork location, and report the findings for each of them separately. The findings are structured to reflect the theoretical framework to guide the reader through them.

Chapter 7 discusses the findings in depth. It compares the findings of both fieldwork locations. It also contrasts the findings of this study with the findings of the tourism literature.

Lastly, in chapter 8, the conclusion, the theoretical framework is assessed. Furthermore, the implications of the study, for both theory and practice, and the limitations of this study are discussed. The thesis concludes by recommending further areas for research that became apparent from the findings of this study.

2 Literature Review: Tourism Development, the Political Economy of Tourism, and the Role of Alternative and Backpacker Tourism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically discusses key strands of literature on tourism in order to place the thesis within current debates and identify the gap in the literature that this thesis aimed to fill. As a search strategy for compiling the literature review, the thesis concentrated on three main literary strands. The first strand was the tourism and development literature to set the context and show the development of the thinking about tourism in LDCs over time. Secondly, the literature on political economy and tourism was analysed, as political economy provides the focal theory of this thesis. Lastly, the literature review assessed studies on the background theory, on alternative tourism, specifically backpacker tourism.

Studies, such as by Walpole and Goodwin (2000), Mbaiwa (2005) and Lacher and Nepal (2010) evaluated the economic importance of tourism to LDCs. However, a multitude of studies focused on economic modelling and economic impact prediction models (see for example (Lee and Chang 2008; Schubert, Brida and Risso 2011). While these studies were important, they were limited in a developing country context due to the lack of available national data. Furthermore, they operated on a different scale and level of detail. This thesis focused on a micro level and local economic linkages, rather than on a national level. Nevertheless, some of the existing studies, which are covered in the following literature review, provided insights into aspects that addressed by the thesis' research questions and offered therefore a guideline for theoretical or methodological issues.

2.2 Tourism and Development Theories

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, tourism was seen as a popular development tool for LDCs. However, the view on tourism and development, and using tourism as a development tool had changed since the post-war period (Gibson 2009). In the beginning of modern tourism development in the 1960s, the concept of development was mostly based on the theory of modernisation. Rostow (1959) popularised this theory and worked it into a linear development model. Modernisation theory needed to be seen in the context of

the Cold War and the ideological battle between capitalism and communism. Rostow (1959) based his model on the rise of the United Kingdom as a modern industrialised nation. He proposed that there are five stages of growth through which a society passes on its way to 'modernity' (Rostow, 1959). These five stages were the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, take off, drive to maturity and the age of mass consumption (Rostow, 1959). In the post-World War II years, modernisation theory shaped the view of development in general, but also tourism development. Rostow's (1959) five stages were then linked to tourism development, suggesting "that participation of local population in tourism is closely related to the level of industrial development of the economy" (Batta 2000). Therefore, (mass-)tourism was identified as one of the sectors that could bring 'modernity' to poorer societies and economies, hence to LDCs.

Although this thesis did not adopt modernisation theory, it is important to understand the development of not only the academic literature on tourism as a modernisation tool, but also its influence on policy makers in the decades following the Second World War. For example, Pack (2008) reflected upon tourism development in Spain during the Franco years and beyond as a form of bringing modernity to the then poor country. Similarly, other Mediterranean destinations such as Cyprus (Sharpley 2002) and Crete (Andriotis 2003) employed the strategy that tourism development hoping it would bring modernity to their islands. However, this often mass-tourism development did not come without its costs, as Macnaught (1982) highlighted the social and cultural costs that came with tourism development in Pacific islands. This raised the question of how tourism development affects various communities.

Therefore the notion of modernisation through tourism development did not remain without its critics. As an alternative to modernisation theory, dependency theory evolved to address questions of (mass-)tourism and development (Telfer 2002). Khan (1997) examined that dependency theorists such as Baran (1957) and Frank (1967) argued that Western capitalism, of which tourism was part of, would drain local resources in LDCs and henceforth negatively impact the local economy, creating underdevelopment in these regions and a greater dependency on the developed countries. Britton (1982) also pointed out that the participation in international tourism is a highly ambiguous development strategy, as the country adopting tourism as a development strategy would be integrated into a global system informed by dependencies. He argued that the dependencies are

rooted in the historical development of a country[12]. Therefore, for studies on development and tourism development, the historical and political context would need to be taken into account to expose underlying dynamics (Britton 1982). This thesis addressed this call by taking into account the recent history of each case study location and its implications on tourism development in the area within Colombia. For this thesis, considering the context aided to identify the interaction between backpacker tourism production and consumption, and the relationship between the power relations between the main three tourism actors and backpacker tourism development.

In an earlier study Britton (1980) had already argued that these dependencies are supported by capitalism due to the exploitation of resources by foreign capital[13]. On the other hand, Fletcher (2011) claimed that it is just the other way around, that tourism supports capitalism. He saw tourism as a form to relocate excess capital that has been accumulated in the developed countries (Fletcher 2011). In relation to tourism and LDCs, this would also be supported by loans granted by international agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF from the developed countries. Those loans would influence the local economy as well as politics, which therefore both need to be considered when analysing tourism development in LDCs.[14]

However, Britton (1982), Fletcher (2011) and Bianchi (2011), among others, mostly studied the inequalities between the LDCs and the 'wealthier' tourism generating countries. This could be seen as a shortcoming in the academic literature on tourism development in LDCs, as it was furthering the notion that LDCs can only be (tourism) producers, but not consumers, and neglecting the consumption habits within LDCs. Therefore, this thesis also focused upon the consumption habits within LDCs (Ferguson 2011), in this case backpackers from Latin America who travel within Latin America. It thereby followed the argument of Hay (2002) who questioned the whole concept of globalisation by arguing that

[12] This concept has been called "path dependency" by economists such as David (1985). It states that events in the past will influence the (economic) development in the future, which can be both predictable and unpredictable.

[13] In relation to tourism, it can be argued here that the "resources" are consisting of the land, nature, culture and people of a host country. There were numerous studies focussing on one of these aspects, e.g. Gössling (1999) on the protection of biodiversity through ecotourism; MacCannell (1976) and Cole (2007) on commodification of culture, etc.

[14] There was a large literature on how those lending agencies influence the tourism policies' of LDCs, such as Hawkins and Mann (2007), Jenkins (1982) and Tosun (2001). However, this topic lay outside of the focus of this thesis.

economic integration was more common within regions than between regions. With regards to tourism, the current numbers of tourist arrivals and receipts would to some extent support Hay's argument. As the UNWTO (2014) stated in their annual report, "four out of five worldwide arrivals originate from the same region" (UNWTO, 2014, p. 12). Furthermore, for 2012, of the 1,032 million international tourist arrivals over 70% went to Europe, North America and the advanced North-Asian countries (Japan, China etc.), earning over 73% of all tourism receipts. Most of the international tourists originated from developed countries in Europe, who provides over 50% of all outbound tourists (UNWTO, 2014). Although LDCs have experienced a higher growth in both tourism receipts and generation (UNWTO, 2014), they were still only marginal in comparison to the developed countries, as the above numbers show. The question therefore remained how far regionalism was supporting international development, or if it was actually hindering it, as, for example, tourists prefer to mainly travel within their region. Consequently, this thesis also analysed Latin American backpackers travelling in Colombia, another Latin American country, thus adding to the view that tourism was often regional.

As already shown in the previous paragraph, dependency theory in the Political Economy of tourism, as advocated by Britton (1980, 1982), was based on three main assumptions that disregarded some factors important to tourism development. Firstly, the theory assumed that tourism was part of a global system. This could be true, but this assumption failed to acknowledge intraregional and also domestic tourism, which was an important sector for many LDCs. In Colombia, for example, the Top 10 origin countries of foreign tourists in 2016 were, apart from the United States, other Latin American countries (Oficina de Estudio Económicos - MinCIT 2017). This also referred to the second assumption which was that there was a wealth transfer from the core to the periphery (Britton, 1991), in tourism's case from the destination LDCs to the tourism-generating developed countries. Again, this assumption could not be easily generalised as it ignored too many local and regional factors. Lastly, tourism was often portrayed as an enclavic development, which although true in some cases (see for example Freitag, 1994), had been disproven in the case of backpacker tourism, which was less enclavic (Hampton, 2003, 2013; Scheyvens, 2002).

In addition, dependency theory had other limitations. Bianchi (2011, p. 22) argued that it would make too many generalisations as it described a "deterministic model of tourism

development in which destinations are systematically exploited and underdeveloped as a consequence of" Transnational Corporations (TNCs) (see also (Oppermann 1993). Therefore, spatial uneven tourism and capitalist development and specific local conditions would be ignored. To address this limitation, this thesis focussed on local SMEs directly involved and affected by tourism development, on both the production and the consumption side of tourism. This uncovered valuable insights from the local communities that is integrated through tourism into a regional and global system, instead of capturing insights from often foreign-run TNCs, as other studies have done. The following section hence reviews the literature on the Political Economy of tourism, focussing on small-scale actors.

2.3 The Political Economy of Tourism

2.3.1 The Political Economy of Tourism and SMEs in Less Developed Countries

There have been several studies on tourism and political economy since the early 1980s, yet there is still considerable potential for further research in this area. Gibson (Gibson 2009; 2008) pointed out that even though various scholars such as Britton (1982) and, two decades on, Debbage and Ioannides (2004) had called for a more serious commitment to studying tourism, especially economic topics and theories, there would still be room for more critical engagement of tourism studies with those topics. Gibson (2009) argued that a lot of tourism research would engage with social and cultural topics, but would still not give sufficient attention to the Political Economy (PE) of tourism. A PE approach would provide further theorisation of tourism's many economic forms, such as niche and alternative tourism, and could aid in analysing tourism's complex issues such as networks and power relations.

The tourism literature that explicitly engages with power relations was still limited, with monographs by Church and Coles (2006), Hall (1994), Macleod and Carrier (2010) and Morgan and Pritchard (1998), as well as some journal articles such as Cheong and Miller (2000), Kayat (2002) and Reed (1997). However, there are further studies that implicitly study power relations, such as Cole's (2017) article on the relationship of water usage, tourism and gender. A PE approach would also address pressing questions around

development, such as poverty and precarious livelihoods (Gibson, 2009). Therefore, for this thesis, a broad PE approach seemed suitable to address the research questions and to follow Britton's (1982) and Gibson's (2009) call.

Many studies addressing political economy issues within tourism development (Bianchi, 2002; Freitag 1994; Britton 1982, 1980), focused on transnational corporations (TNCs) as the engines of economic development in LDCs. However, within the tourism industries, apart from the capital-intensive sectors such as international hotels and airlines, most of the enterprises were small and medium-sized businesses (OECD 2005), which is why this thesis placed its focus upon them rather than TNCs.[15]

Micro-enterprises, providing a livelihood for less than 10 people, were the most common form of company in the hotel sector in most OECD countries in 2005, ranging between 65 and 98%[16]. For travel agencies and tourism operators 83 to 99.9% of the businesses were micro-enterprises (OECD 2005). It could be assumed that in developing countries that were just starting out with international tourism, like Colombia, the numbers might have been even higher due to less tourism TNCs operating there yet.[17] Furthermore, since alternative tourism, such as backpacker tourism, claimed to be of a smaller scale (Hampton 2003; 1998), the tourism enterprises should have mostly consisted of SMEs as well. SMEs should therefore play a key role in the analysis of the political economy literature of tourism alongside TNCs. Therefore, this thesis evaluated local players rather than global players of tourism development in different regions to address the often-perceived assumption that only global companies were determining economic development.

Then again, Bianchi (2011) and Harvey (2003) argued that over the course of time due to the accumulative nature of capitalism, smaller companies and self-employed workers

[15] There were tourism studies with an Institutional Theory approach such as Rivera (2004) on the influence of institutional forces on hotel development. However, Institutional Theory seemed more appropriate to research on TNCs and policy makers. This thesis however focused on small local actors that are usually overlooked by policy makers. Stevenson et al. (2008) considered pros and cons of Institutional Theory briefly, and pointed out that it might underplay social and political processes, which was another important factor of this thesis. Therefore Institutional Theory was not considered a suitable approach for this research.

[16] Due to limited data, no numbers on tourism SMEs in developing countries could be established.

[17] No official numbers on tourism businesses could be established.

would be dispossessed of their means of production by more powerful companies. This would mean, however, that there would only be a few powerful companies, also in the tourism sector. This might have been true for some sectors in some regions (e.g. in the airline industry), but generally speaking, as the data from the OECD shows, the majority of tourism businesses in the destinations were SMEs, also in long established tourism destinations, and should therefore receive the same academic attention as the TNCs.

Scholars like Bianchi (2002), focussing on more theoretical issues in tourism, pointed out that small-scale entrepreneurs could not change the system of production. However, the objective of this thesis was to show how those SMEs operate within the system that they are part of. For most owners of SMEs it was about their livelihood and not about overcoming capitalism[18]. Furthermore, studies on SMEs in tourism such as Hampton (2003), Shaw and Williams (2002) and Wanhill (2000) indicated that these enterprises foster economic development at a local and regional level.

Moreover, the role of governmental actors could not be ignored. With the rise of neoliberalism, also in Colombia, governance had been de- and re-regulated, also to act within different geographical scales, on an international, national, regional and local level (Shaw and Williams 2004). This could pose a challenge for local and regional tourism development having to deal with new regulatory networks, as Shone et al. (2016) experienced in his case study in New Zealand. Hence, the thesis theoretical framework also included governmental actors when assessing the relationship between backpacker tourism development and the power relations of the main tourism actors.

2.3.2 Structure and Agency in Tourism Research

As shown above, the economic (and political) structure seemed to be the main focus point for dependency theorists and Marxist scholars. This was not without critique. Mosedale (2011) claimed that Marxism would focus too much on the overarching structure and materiality, overlooking cultural factors that these scholars claim would be overrepresented in research (Bianchi 2009). Regarding the link of culture and economy, Mosedale (2011) argued that the economy is embedded in culture as companies and entrepreneurs act

[18] For a discussion on tourism, capitalism and livelihoods see Gibson (2009). For an analysis of the precarious work situation in international tourism in the Seychelles see Lee *et al.* (2015).

within social networks that are informed by their social structures. His proposed framework was based on broad political economy approaches, and is more of an analysis of how political and economic institutions were shaped by their actions over the course of time, and give actors “the capacity to cause different results” within existing structures (Mosedale 2011, p. 98). He concluded that “[s]tructure is therefore not an impersonal force that is inherent in capitalism, but rather the outcome of agency as fashioned and circulated by a dominant mass of individuals” (Mosedale, 2011, p. 94). Mosedale further developed this notion in his 2016 publication, basing his argument on Harvey (2005). Harvey (2005) reasoned that state institutions should provide the appropriate structure for individuals to become entrepreneurs. The individual’s agency would then allow them to acquire the necessary intellectual, social, and human capital to engage with the market (Mosedale 2016). However, “[p]otential social disadvantages that may hinder the development of social capital are largely discounted [for]…” (Mosedale, 2016, p. 2)

Hay (2002), another PE scholar, also saw structure and agency in conjunction as one would be fundamental to understand the other. Elsewhere he wrote that “all human agency occurs and acquires meaning only in relation to already pre-constituted, and deeply structured, settings” (Hay 1995), p. 200). Nevertheless, in his opinion they could be studied separately for analytical purposes.

In regards to tourism research, there were various studies focussing on either one or the other. For example, Baggio and Cooper (2010) examined social networks and knowledge sharing in tourism destinations. Guilding et al. (2005) analysed the agency within the relationship of unit owners and resident managers of holiday condominiums. Larsen et al. (2011) found that stakeholder agency within formal and informal institutions was the main factor for successful resilience building in Thai coastal communities.

However, there seemed to be only few studies considering both structure and agency. For example, Bramwell and Meyer (2007) supported Hay’s (2002) view of the conjunction of structure and agency. They focussed their study about the tourism development in Eastern Germany on the interactive relations between actors and structure with regards to power and policy making. They saw structures as both predetermined by past decisions, but also as emergent and leading to new ones being created (Bramwell and Meyer, 2007). Their study analysed how the actors of tourism development were affected by these structures,

and also how the actors interacted and reshaped these. Bramwell and Meyer's (2007) main focus was to contribute to break down the theoretical divide and promote non-dualistic thinking, instead linking those two parts like agency and structure, or local and global, to create a fuller picture of the world. How these theoretical concepts mentioned above are applied to alternative tourism research is explored in the following section.

2.5 The Role of Alternative and Backpacker Tourism

“Do alternative forms of tourism occupy different spaces between the market and state or do they merely reproduce dominant relationships in a different form?” (Mosedale, 2011, p. 104) Several scholars addressed Mosedale’s question. Mowforth and Munt (2003) argued that alternative forms of tourism, such as backpacker tourism or eco-tourism, developed from the 1970s onwards in opposition to the packaged mass-tourism due to its negative socio-economic and environmental impacts on destinations. These alternative forms of tourism were “focusing broadly on local environmental and socio-economic needs and more meaningful tourist-host encounters” (Sharpley, 2006, p. 8). In his study on the demand and consumption of ecotourism, Sharpley (2006) demonstrated that its development is rather supply than demand-driven. This could be seen as an indicator of alternative forms of tourism such as backpacker tourism addressing niche markets that mass tourism had not reached before. However, in this context, one has to consider the role of the tourists themselves as well as cultural changes happening during the 1960s and 1970s. The demand for alternative forms of travel was also driven by the Western youth who became interested in ecology, local cultures and spirituality. This development expressed itself, for example, through the development of the so called ‘hippy trail’ from Istanbul via Kabul, Kathmandu to Bali, essentially the birth of backpacker tourism (E. Cohen, 1973; Hampton, 2013).

Much of the recent research on tourism and its relationship with neoliberalism had been carried out on ecotourism and community-based tourism (CBT), although the two are often interlinked. The implications of these studies could, however, also apply to backpacker tourism. A common theme was that they argued this form of tourism was small-scale, community-orientated and low entrance barriers to participate in tourism as entrepreneurs or employees (Hampton 2003, 1998; Scheyvens 2002).

Brockington et al. (2008) pointed out that ecotourism operated within neoliberal understandings of conservation and development, without challenging the existing framework. Although at first glance ecotourism seemed very promising in addressing the negative effects of mass tourism:

> "Neoliberal conservation […] promises more. It promises increased democracy and participation by dismantling restrictive state structures and practices. It promises to protect rural communities by guaranteeing their property rights and helping them enter into conservation-oriented business ventures. It promises to promote green business practices, by demonstrating to corporations that green is also profitable [...] it promises to promote environmental consciousness for western consumers by encouraging them to fall in love with the environment through direct connections to it." (Igoe and Brockington 2007), p. 434)

Duffy (2002) reasoned that, surprisingly, ecotourism was not actually a radical and sustainable alternative to dominant development paradigms, but rather operated within existing structures as just another business that is in competition with other businesses for customers, therefore concentrating more on profit than on conservation[19]. It would rather see nature as a resource that can lead to a competitive advantage. Ecotourism would therefore support the development favoured by neoliberal economics and its major actors lending money to developing countries, such as the World Bank and the governments of developed countries. Duffy (2002) concluded that consequently ecotourism did not constitute a threat but is part of the current neoliberal, capitalist system.

According to Igoe and Brockington (2007, p. 433) "… global neoliberalism […] revolves around the restructuring of the world to facilitate the spread of free markets…" They proposed the alternative term of 'neoliberalisation', because it described a process rather than a state, and differed between places. It included a few key processes such as deregulation: "The assumption is that corrupt and inefficient states restrict free trade, free assembly, free speech, and free press. It follows that if the state were less intrusive in these matters, people's lives would naturally improve" (Igoe and Brockington, 2007, p.

[19] It was not the intention of the thesis to discuss if ecotourism can be rather seen as development practise instead of a challenge to the paradigm. Whereas Duffy (2014; 2006b; 2002) defended a more critical position, others, such as the International Ecotourism Society (2014) took a more simplistic view defending ecotourism as a sustainable solution for conservation and economic development. For a more nuanced view see Weaver and Lawton (2007) and Weaver (2001).

437). A re- or de-regulation would on the other hand cause decentralized and uneven states that are reliant on financial and technical support from outside, and would be easier permeated by external actors and institutions (Igoe and Brockington, 2007). Duffy (2002), however, pointed out that the structures of the regulations were dictated by other outside actors that determine the pace and direction of development, therefore defining current government structures as inefficient. This in turn could then lead to undermining the local governments to enforce their policies properly by both legal global networks such as TNCs and illegal (global) networks such as drug cartels.

But neoliberal development policies could also be interpreted as re-regulation (Castree 2008), which allows the state to turn former free goods into commodities. This view was supported by Fletcher (2011) who also argued that alternative tourism would only commodify previously neglected features, such as nature and culture, and would therefore contribute to the spread of capitalism by means of tourism. This view was, however, debatable. Brockington et al. (2008) called this commodification with regard to ecotourism the 'ecotourism bubble', which is created due to fact that social and political dynamics of ecotourism were often overlooked or obscured. This 'bubble' is a commodified experience that meets the expectations of the tourists while concealing the socio-ecological implications of producing such experience. Hence, conservation and capitalism would join forces to reshape the world (Brockington et al., 2008). This commodification had been researched in the tourism literature for the non-human environment (Duffy, 2014 on elephants) and culture (e.g. Cole (2007) on indigenous cultures in Indonesia; Shoval (2000) on religion and religious experiences in Israel; Xie (2003) on indigenous dances in China).

For the supporters of neoliberal development strategies, "…neoliberal discourses are often presented as a pie that can grow bigger and bigger until everyone can have a piece … This is a world in which it is possible to create value ad infinitium" (Igoe and Brockington 2007, p. 434; see also Harvey 2005, Castree 2009, 2008). That this was not a utopian concept is still to be proven. Despite the criticism, Igoe and Brockington (2007, p. 445) argued that "[t]he term 'neoliberalism' [was] at risk of becoming nothing more than a vehicle for academics to criticise things that they do not like about the world." There was a necessity to analyse the patterns that evolve from the studies that engage with neoliberalism and neoliberalisation to draw conclusions about general impacts, as

neoliberal development could have advantages and disadvantages for the environment and local communities (Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Butcher, 2003).

Critics of alternative tourism, such as Butcher (2003), claimed that alternative tourism would just provide a 'feel-good' factor for the tourists themselves, and would just support the growth of capitalism by adding another consumer group to tourism. In accordance with the scholars mentioned above, he pointed out that alternative tourism practices only obscure the real causes of poverty and inequality (Butcher 2005). He questioned the moral authority of alternative tourists in making the world a better place while simultaneously doubting that their choice for alternative tourism made a contribution to poverty alleviation, as it was too small-scale, would not earn enough foreign exchange for a country and would not create as much employment as mass tourism. At the end, alternative tourism would produce fewer negative impacts than mass tourism, but also fewer positive ones (Butcher 2003).

This was contrary to the evidence of several academic papers, especially regarding backpacker tourism. For example, Lee *et al.* (2015) and Freitag (1994) found in their studies on mass tourism establishments such as all-inclusive hotels, that the work that was provided for the locals was often only available in low-paying positions such as cleaners and waiters. Outsiders or expatriates mostly filled the well-paid roles in the middle and upper management. Therefore mass tourism might have generated employment for locals, but within the low income sector, often leading to precarious work situations for the local people such as seasonal contracts (Lee *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, studies of alternative forms of tourism have shown greater engagement of the local community within tourism employment (Ateljevic and Doorne 2005; E. Cohen 2006; Hampton 2003, 1998). Several studies found that backpacker tourism only requires low initiating costs, and it was therefore more accessible to participate in for local entrepreneurs and communities (Cole 2008; Hampton 1998; Scheyvens 2002). It created employment in the community, from unskilled jobs to running their own business. Both Hampton (1998) and Scheyvens (2002) emphasised the necessity and positive effect of autonomy on the self-esteem of a community and its people. Control over their local businesses would also give the community a better position from which to negotiate with tourism organisations and planners (Scheyvens, 2002). However, these organisations needed to be scrutinised critically as they can be run on a local, regional and national level by their elites, often

seeming to ignore the needs of people from a disadvantaged socio-economic background (Tosun 2006; Tosun 2000). Furthermore, Brenner and Fricke (2007) found in their case study in Mexico that usually foreigners or outsiders from the metropolitan regions had more financial means and connections which allows them to enter the tourism market more easily, especially in rural areas. To what extend the findings from the studies mentioned in this literature review applied to the case study of this thesis will be discussed in Chapter 7.

2.6 Summary

This literature review looked at tourism development in LDCs and different theories and paradigms behind this development. It has traced the origin of tourism development from modernization theory and the criticism it received from dependency theorists. The review then assessed the role of SMEs in the tourism industry in LDCs, and argued for more academic studies on these SMEs in the context of regional and local political economy of tourism. Lastly, the role of alternative tourism and development has been shortly evaluated. This thesis focused on SMEs in alternative tourism that operate in the global system of tourism. It built on Ferguson’s (2011; 2010) work on regionalisation and Mosedale's (2011) concept of embeddedness, which are further explained in the following chapter.

3 Theoretical Framework

As noted in the previous chapter, there is a need for more theorisation in tourism research. In this section the theoretical framework of this thesis and the concepts behind it are developed. The theoretical framework of this thesis combined two existing frameworks, one by Ferguson (2011) and the other by Mosedale (2011). It provided a comprehensive framework that served to analyse the relationship of the three main actors of small-scale tourism development in a community, including all affected actors and their interrelations of various types. Ferguson is a PE scholar who has also carried out research in a tourism context, and her model comprised the basis for an analysis of small, local actors and their role in a global and regional economy. Mosedale is a tourism scholar with an interest in PE, and his framework of embeddedness addressed the broader issues of structure and agency, and the relationships between economy, culture and politics. In the following chapter, both frameworks are analysed, and the components of the framework of the study will be discussed.

As a theoretical basis, a broad political economy approach was used in this study. It provided the wide and interrelated concept of the political, economic and social spheres that are all part of the economic process and that influence the tourism development process of a region. Several scholars such as Bramwell (2011) and Williams (2004) have pointed out that there has been a hesitant engagement of tourism research with political economy approaches. Even though, for example, Britton's (1982) study on the influence of TNCs on the tourism development in small island states in the Pacific was often cited in tourism works, a lot of time has passed since then. Williams (2004) argued that there has not been much theoretical development on tourism and PE, but it is not entirely clear why this could be[20]. However, some scholars have picked up on this gap and have worked on linking tourism and PE, and also focused on more theoretical issues. Britton (1991, 1982) made a start with his studies applying dependency theory, and Bianchi (2009; 2002), from a neo-Marxist perspective, has also engaged in more theoretical discussions, both calling attention to research tourism within a PE context. More recently Mosedale (2011) published a monograph on tourism and PE, which will be discussed later in this chapter,

[20] Tribe (2006; 1997) argued that one explanation might be that tourism research has been centred around practical business approaches and within business schools, therefore limiting the exploration of other tourism-related topics. See also Gibson (2008) for a review on tourism (geography) research, concluding that tourism research within geography is also still (unrightfully) marginalised.

and has edited a second monograph on neoliberalism and the political economy of tourism in 2016. Furthermore, an application of PE in the context of backpacker tourism was rare (see Hampton, 2013), and therefore this study contributed to the further advancing of tourism PE literature and its theoretical development.

3.1 Tourism Consumption

Ferguson's (2011) study on the changing social relations and consumption habits in female tourism worker's households in Central America provided the cornerstone for the analysis of tourism consumption of this thesis. Although Bramwell (2011, p. 460) stated that Political Economy “puts particular emphasis on the economic relations within which humans find themselves”, Ferguson (2011) pointed out that PE literature has neglected the human side of the economy, focussing too much on large global actors such as TNCs, raising the need to analyse broader processes and actors within IPE. That is why Ferguson's (2011) study focused on small actors in LDCs, a component that is also part of the framework of this thesis, which includes various actors, specifically regional and international tourists, and local, regional and international tourism entrepreneurs of SMEs. Small and local actors are also part of a global system of capitalist production and consumption. Ferguson (2011) argued that in order to fully understand global changes, it would be necessary to analyse also these rural and local groups and their interaction with global processes, as they are part of the global production and consumption cycle already, integrated by the consumption of global products, for example.

However, this thesis took this notion a step further and placed emphasis on the fact that people from LDCs are also consuming tourism, and are not only seen as producers of these services as in Ferguson's (2011) study. There seemed to be a lack of studies focusing on tourism consumption from tourists from LDCs in other LDCs. A few studies emerged, such as Ghimire's (2001) collection of studies on mass domestic tourism in developing countries. However, there was still a lack of academic understanding of the impacts that tourists from other developing countries have on the tourism development in LDCs. Ferguson (2011) applied qualitative analysis to reveal the consumption habits of people from the LDCs, an approach that this study will follow, as explained in Chapter 4. The consumption patterns of tourists from the developing world, such as preferences for certain activities or accommodation, could unveil useful insights into communities that

primarily live from tourism. This then could have further implications on business development in these communities, as well as social consequences such as power relations between tourists and producers, and also between the members of the communities.

Ferguson (2011) pointed out that this is an important aspect, understanding the costs and benefits of tourism development to communities and different groups within those communities. However, she analysed the social relations of consumption within the communities and used the household of tourism workers as a side of analysis (Ferguson, 2011). She defined consumption as a set of social and material practices such as buying and cooking food, but does not necessarily see consumption as a leisure activity, but as part of daily survival. This might have been true for her study and examples such as nutrition and clothing. However, as noted earlier in this thesis, there is a lack of research analysing the production and consumption of the same tourism products. That is why the focus of this thesis stayed on the tourism product being consumed by the travellers to assess the impact of tourism development, as production and consumption are intrinsically linked in tourism.

In this case, the thesis particularly examined Latin American independent travellers and backpackers who travel in Colombia (and are the consumers in this study) as an expression of the concept of regionalism[21]. Along with them, backpackers from other parts of the world were included to contrast the two groups. Also, the producers of tourism products can be either local, regional or international. Both groups of consumers and producers therefore showed that in tourism development the local and regional sits alongside the global. Furthermore, as a somewhat special case of Colombia's artesanos[22], in some cases an individual actor might be a producer of a tourism product in one circumstance, but a consumer in another.

An important aspect of this thesis was linking regional and local actors such as regional

[21] In an earlier paper Ferguson (2010) had already picked up upon the concept of regionalism, as an expression to promote tourism across Central America through mutual policies between neighbouring countries. In this study, I will use it as an expression of tourists from the same geographical region (Latin America) travelling to a destination within Latin America, in this case Colombia.

[22] Artesano in this study refers to mainly young, sometimes semi-settled travellers from mostly Latin America who finance their travels around Latin America by selling their handicrafts such as jewellery, homemade food or by making music, as described by Broocks and Hannam (2016).

tourists and local entrepreneurs with global actors such as international tourists and international tourism entrepreneurs in one framework. Therefore, this framework included actors from LDCs as both producers and consumers of small-scale tourism services, and aims to unveil development patterns specific to this region, that is, Latin America. The following section will look at how these ideas of tourism consumption and production were combined with Mosedale's (2011) model of embeddedness, which provides the second part of this framework that complement Ferguson's ideas.

3.2 Embeddedness of Tourism

As mentioned above, this framework encompassed actors and structures from both the production and the consumption side of tourism. Especially in the tourism sector, where production and consumption are intrinsically interlinked, this thesis followed Ateljevic's (2000) call to consider both sides in the same studies for a full understanding of the processes and global changes that happen. More often, contrary to academic studies in other service management disciplines (Korczynski and Ott 2004; O'Farrell and Moffat 1991), tourism studies only focused on one of them, either production (e.g. Britton 1982, 1980; Fletcher 2011; Lee *et al.* 2013) or consumption (e.g. du Cros 2014; Duffy 2014; Howard 2007). Therefore, this study focused on both backpackers as consumers, and businesses catering to them as producers of the tourism experience.

Production and consumption have long been viewed as being dichotomous, whereas production is seen as economic behaviour, and consumption is rather associated with leisure and culture (Ateljevic, 2000). Both Mosedale (2011) and Ateljevic (2000) argued that many tourism studies focus too much on the overarching structure and materiality, meaning the production side, but overlook cultural factors and consumption. The 'cultural turn' in tourism studies (Carmichael Aitchison 2006; Debbage and Ioannides 2004) took those factors more into account, as culture also permeates economic decisions. Researchers now also focused on culture and consumption in tourism (see Urry and Larsen 2011). For example, material objects can become laden with sign-value (MacCannell, 1976), such as souvenirs, which are an important aspect of tourism consumption, and are valuable for the tourist because of the meaning they attach to it rather than its actual material value (Gross 2004). Also tourists can consume immaterial objects of culture. Xie (2003) observed how the traditional bamboo-beating dance in

Hainan is sold to, and performed for, tourists, whereas Cole (2007) observed the commodification of dance, dress and customs of Indonesian ethnic minorities in Flores for tourists. So culture becomes part of tourism production and consumption, and has become a mean to promote cross-cultural relations and also to create a favourable cultural image for tourists (Turner, Reisinger and McQuilken 2002).

The consideration of culture in an economic context results in points of contact between production, as explained above linked to the economy, and consumption, which was often linked to culture. It can therefore help diminish the dichotomy between the two (Ateljevic, 2000; Mosedale, 2011). Linking them both in one study will provided a fuller picture of the tourism development in a community, as according to Mosedale (2011) the why, what and how tourists consume is an important part of examining economic processes. The linkage between the two is then explored in three types of embeddedness, based on Mosedale's (2011) proposed framework.

To analyse these cultural and social dimension that influence the economic decision-making, Ferguson's framework was synthesised with a concept by Mosedale (2011)[23], which was also situated within the political economy of tourism. Mosedale's (2011) concept added further dimensions and a structure to the analysis building on Ferguson's (2011) study, adding the necessary elements to analyse also the production side. With regard to the link between culture and economy, Mosedale (2011) argued that the economy is embedded in culture as companies and entrepreneurs act within social networks that are informed by their social structures. This also meant that for Mosedale (2011) structure and agency were interlinked, as economic and social interactions are informed by each other. He pointed out though that one has to see the “economy as a dynamic, socio-spatial and differentiated economic landscape embedded in place-specific cultural contexts and social relations” (Mosedale, 2011, p. 12). Therefore the results of socio-economic studies should be seen as specific to the place and time.

This would also apply to the way these results are reported, as there is the possibility of multiple, co-existing narratives about the same event (Mosedale, 2011). Nevertheless, he argued that structure and agency are important for economic and social outcomes, and their relationship is multi-layered, also due to their various narratives. To uncover these

[23] There was no known application of Mosedale's (2011) framework to a case study to the author.

interlinkages Mosedale (2011) proposed a model of three-dimensional embeddedness.

His framework to analyse the political economy of tourism was based on Zukin and DiMaggio's (1990) model of embeddedness[24]. Mosedale (2011) distinguished between cultural, social and political embeddedness within the tourism industry as a model for analyses in PE. Cultural embeddedness analyses the influence of shared values and understandings on economic activities, whereas social embeddedness examines the influence of social relations and how these are articulated, and political embeddedness refers to the relationship between the private and public sectors and how they influence each other's decision-making.

As his model can be applied to different political economy approaches (e.g. cultural PE, feminist PE), it provided an appropriate basis for an analysis of how political and economic institutions are shaped by their actions over the course of time, and give actors "the capacity to cause different results" within existing structures (Mosedale 2011, p. 98). In this thesis there was a focus on how the businesses as economic institutions are (re)shaped by the owners and tourists, and the other way around, as well as by political, social and cultural influences.

3.3 Construction of the Framework of this Thesis

As noted earlier, this thesis combined the two frameworks introduced above, the one by Ferguson (2011) and the other by Mosedale (2011). It extended these by examining tourism production and consumption in one single study, as well as focussing on actors in LDCs as both producers and consumers of the tourism product. The following section explains the elements of the new framework: the SMEs, the backpackers, and also the influence the governmental actors have directly or indirectly on both of them. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation to demonstrate the relationships between the three main

[24] Embeddedness as a concept was developed by economic anthropologist Polanyi (1944). He argued that the self-regulating market is not any more informed by exchanges conducted due to social relations, but economy is superordinate to society. This means that the economy has a greater influence on society than society has on the economy. Granovetter (2005; 1985) picks up on Polanyi's model, but contends that economic behaviour is indeed very much embedded in the market society. Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) then further developed the idea of embeddedness into a framework, distinguishing between cognitive embeddedness (how mental processes influence economic activities), cultural embeddedness, social embeddedness, and political embeddedness.

actor groupings to map their complex relationships. Linking back to the literature review on structure and agency and linking the two, within the framework there are the individual actors, such as the individual backpackers.

On the production side, SMEs that primarily cater to backpackers were the main elements of analysis. As noted above, tourism products and experiences were not only produced by tourism TNCs as often studied, but typically dominated by SMEs (OECD, 2014). This dissertation focused on these small actors, as they play a significant role in the global tourism phenomenon, and are, just like TNCs, integrated into the global system of tourism production and consumption. This was due to either being frequented by regional and international tourists, or by being run by international tourism entrepreneurs themselves. This study focused on businesses catering to backpacker and independent travellers, as in a destination they use the services provided by SMEs rather than generally using the ones offered by tourism TNCs.

Furthermore, SMEs played a vital role in the development of tourism destinations, as they were usually the first tourism businesses to be opened (see Butler 1980) due to low capital requirements (Hampton 1998; Scheyvens 2002; Thomas, Shaw and Page 2011). Additionally, as they were often owned by local people or others living in the local community, the direct contribution to development and the social-economic changes within the community can be more easily assessed, and is often more far-reaching. Those SMEs were also part of said community, and their decision-making might be influenced by actions of the community, such as the use of sacred sites or the security situation. Being part of the community then has also further implications for power structures, as who makes and drives decision-making in the community. This research assessed these power structures within the studied communities by analysing existing tourism businesses, how they were set up, how they operate, and by whom. The access to financial capital to start a business as well as the relationship between the businesses, which might or might not be expressed through local associations, provided insights into power relations within the community.

Furthermore, Ferguson (2011) pointed out that it is necessary to understand how communities and also different groups within these communities are affected by the advantages and disadvantages of tourism development, and how this reshapes local

(power) structures. As the community acts as a link between the global (tourism industry) and the individual (locals) it is situated in a field of tension of different interests (Milne and Ateljevic 2001). Ferguson (2011, p. 368), for example, found that "[c]hanges in the political economy of consumption have led to both a rupturing and a reinforcement of inequalities" in the studied rural communities. The findings of this study therefore also provide some insights into the development of inequalities[25] within the community, be it economically, or politically.

Moreover, the political actors can be either directly part of the community or the decision-making can be influenced by outsiders, such as government institutions. For example, in many LDCs tourism is used as an economic development tool and especially targeted at poor, rural people, running small-scale tourism businesses (Ferguson 2010; Mowforth and Munt 2003; Spenceley and Meyer 2012). The development of tourism is not only driven by private sector investments, but also by various aid agencies such as the DFID and USAID, who have identified tourism as a development strategy[26], especially in rural areas as an alternative to agriculture (Ferguson, 2010). However, the aid given is often linked to specific conditions, which are influenced by how the aid giver frames poverty, and their social and political agenda (Chambers 1981; Ferguson 2010; Mowforth and Munt 2003). This then again can influence laws and regulations issued by national or regional governments, and then influence the decision making of the tourism businesses in the communities. Power issues are therefore important to analyse as part of understanding the PE of global tourism and its influence on local communities.

Besides, regional and national governments and other outside actors also exert power by deciding what kind of tourism is promoted and how. Therefore, an analysis of this also formed part of the framework. These power issues were pointed out by Milne and Ateljevic (2001). They called it the global-local nexus: national governments are active in promoting tourism for their country and therefore creating the tourism demand in their country. By this

[25] While there were some findings on inequalities, it is a broad research area that lay beyond the scope of this thesis.

[26] Pro Poor Tourism (PPT) has been discussed in the literature over the past 20 years. It aimed to bring net benefits of tourism to the poor (Harrison 2008). This can be either via community-based tourism or Harrison (2008) also advocated for the spread of benefits from mass tourism to the poor. Furthermore, Ashley, Boyd and Goodwin (2000) noted that tourism is mostly driven by commercial interests, and PPT can therefore be only viable if the operations are economically successful. PPT has not been without critique (see for example Harrison 2008; Meyer 2007; Scheyvens 2007.

they are likewise influencing what kind of tourism is developed by the promotion, depending on what kind of tourists they target (Dieke 2013). This is therefore also a political choice which influences what kind of tourism is developed and what kind of tourism businesses develop due to this in the local communities. Hence, an analysis of how the tourism production is shaped by the government, industry and outside sources (guide books, blogs etc.) will be a component of this thesis. Both of the aforementioned issues relate back to Mosedale's (2011) political embeddedness.

Moreover, not only are decisions made on a national level influencing the tourism development, but both Milne and Ateljevic (2001) and Ferguson (2011, 2010) pointed out the importance of regions. Regions are defined by cultural or political characteristics, but are also expressed through networks, such hostel associations (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Regionalism by Ferguson (2010, 2011) was expressed through collective policy making, in her studies to promote tourism across Central America. However, this thesis took this concept towards consumption by especially focussing on tourists from the region, meaning from Latin America. Again, Ferguson focused only on LDCs as producers of tourism activities. This study used the concept of regionalism, however, to also focus on LDCs as tourism consumers. This finds its expression in the consumption behaviour by regional tourists.

This notion further developed the work of Milne and Ateljevic (2001). They stressed the connection between the global and the local, which is influenced by economic, cultural and environmental factors that all interact with each other and create unique and complex outcomes of development. “We cannot understand the context of local tourism development unless we grapple with this complexity and better understand how key stakeholders (government, industry, community, tourists) interact both within and between multiple 'nested' scales”[27] (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001, p. 374). Nested scales can then be seen in this context as the relationships between different actors on local, national and global scales (Bunnell and Coe 2001). This would then feed into Mosedale’s (2011) concept of embeddedness, and add to Ferguson’s (2011) concept of linking the local, regional and global, analysing the actors in the three different types of embeddedness, based on three different scales.

[27] ‘Nested scales’ describes a concept to analyse the relationship between society and space, as a way to organise subject matter (e.g. local, regional, national, global level) often used in political geography (Collinge, 2005).

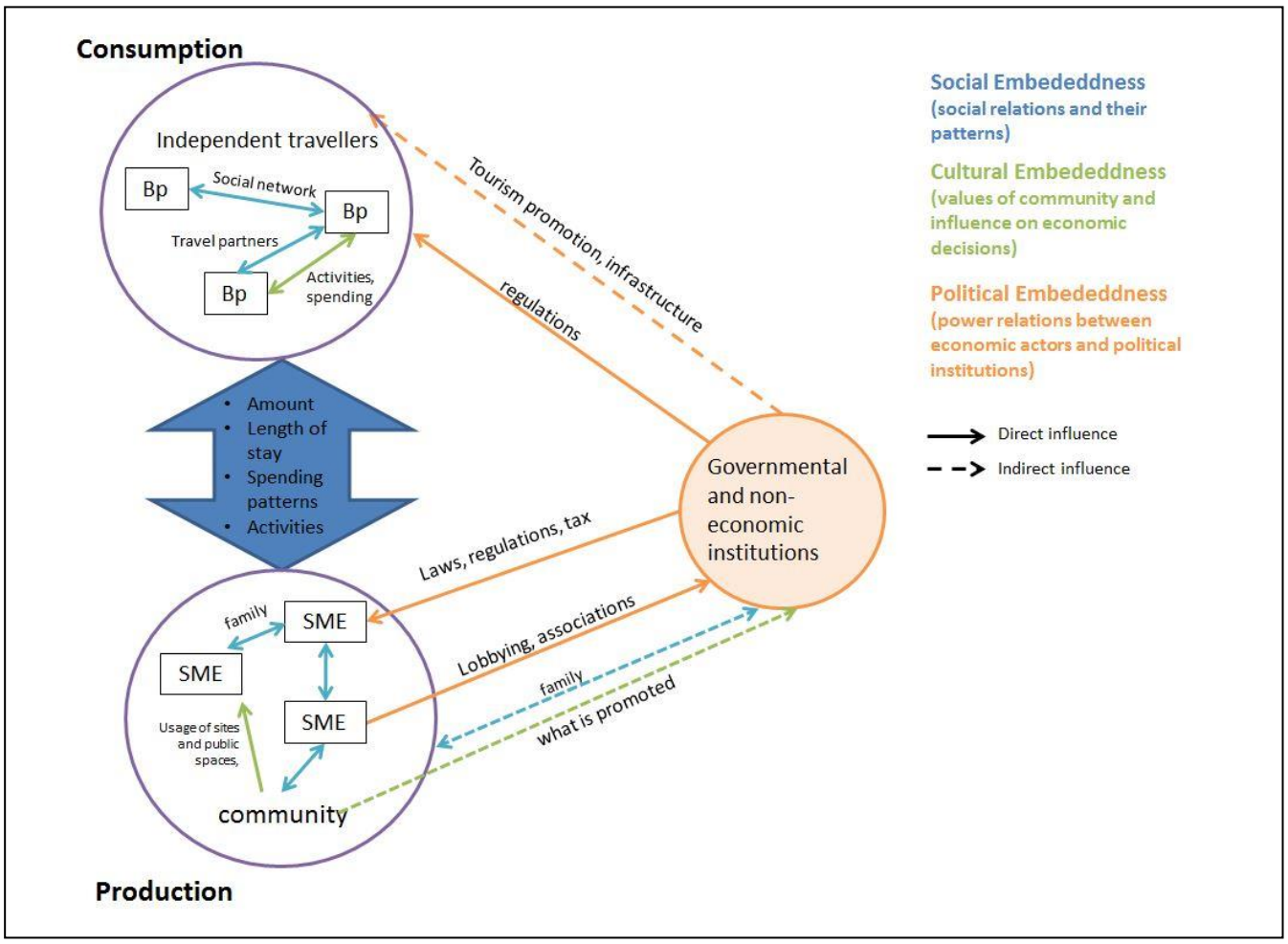

Figure 1: Graphic Overview of Theoretical Framework. Source: Author.

As tourism development is an extensive area of study, this thesis contributed by analysing the backpacker tourism production and consumption in two rural communities in Colombia. It analysed the tourism business structure in the community, including the backward linkages into the local economy. Within the analysis, aspects such as nationality, gender and socio-economic status were considered in relation to access and power, on both the production and the consumption site. This helped to uncover to what extent social and economic inequalities are reinforced or abolished through tourism development in those communities.

3.4 Summary

The proposed framework for this study provided a comprehensive tool to analyse the

interrelationships between the three main actors of tourism development as explained above: the regional and international tourists, the local, regional and international tourism businesses that are part of the local communities, and finally the regional and national government actors that might influence the decision making of the other actors. The new framework was composed of two existing ones frameworks that complement each other. On one hand, Ferguson's (2011) model served to analyse how different local communities and local groups within these communities are responding to tourism development, its costs and its benefits. It assessed the influence of production and consumption on possible inequalities within the local communities regarding financial access, nationality, gender etc. Furthermore, it placed the focus of consumption on people from LDCs, an often-neglected topic in the main academic literature.

On the other hand, Mosedale's (2011) framework provided more far-reaching dimensions of analysis to Ferguson's model that provide the structure the three main actors are operating within. Tourism businesses are embedded in social networks, which are informed by social relations and cultural and political contexts. Therefore, the economic activity is influenced by the social, taking both the economic and political structure as well as the agency of the actors within tourism development into account. The combination of these two frameworks appeared to provide highly appropriate components for an analysis of the relationships of the tourism actors and how they influence the tourism development in rural communities in Colombia.

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The research aim of this thesis was to understand the nature of the relationship of the three main backpacker tourism actors, and how these actors were socially, culturally and politically embedded in backpacker tourism development. This thesis set out to address the research aim by using qualitative research, as this kind of research "… seeks to understand the world through interacting with, empathising with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors." (Brockington and Sullivan 2003, p. 57) and would therefore be the appropriate approach to address the research aim. The research design was informed by the conceptual framework outlined in the previous chapter, and consisted of the collection of data through ethnographic tourism fieldwork that will be explained in detail in the following sections.

The main data collection involved interviewing, ethnographic observation and site mapping. Furthermore, statistics and official documents as well as complementary grey literature such as travel blogs were analysed. Also, a relatively new method of mapping visitor flows as employed by Hampton and Hamzah (2016) was employed, where backpackers drew their travel route into copies of a map of the region. It was thought that these methods were the most useful to gain insights to address the research aim and to answer the research questions. The research design and its relation to the other aspects is further discussed throughout this chapter.

4.2 Philosophical Perspective – A Critical Approach

> *"… [T]he essential reasons for doing field research haven't changed much through the ages: We learn about the other to better understand them and ourselves. Benefiting from that personally and professionally, we can make the world a less strange and difficult place by telling of what we learn and shedding light on the world's complex and interwoven realities."* (Delyser and Starrs 2001, p. viii)

This quote reflects the position this thesis took concerning the philosophical perspective, as the aim of the thesis was to understand the nature of the relationship between the three main tourism actors, and how their embeddedness influences tourism development. The emphasis lay thereby on the 'understanding', as also mentioned in the quote above. The ontology and epistemology of this thesis echoed this research aim. Blaikie (2009, p. 8) defined ontology as our assumption of the social reality, the units that make it up and how they interact with each other. This thesis did not aspire to find one 'universal truth' about tourism development in Colombia. Rather, it followed Duffy's (2002) approach of a more 'flexible truth'. This means that there is no set social reality, but it is rather constructed by each individual. The study participants constructed their social world, "which is significant because people believe it" (Duffy, 2002, p. xvi). Furthermore, Tribe (2006) suggested that there are various concepts of truth across culture(s) and time. Therefore, he noted, research is influenced by factors such as language, concepts and rules that are already existing, both in regards to the researcher and the researched (Tribe, 2006). In support of this viewpoint, I acknowledge that there is some form of relativism in the sense that "our *understanding* of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoints." (Maxwell 2012, p. 5; original emphasis) This means that the research is influenced not only by the understanding of the social reality of the research participants, but also by my own understanding of it.

Building on this ontology perspective, the epistemology of this thesis is closest to a critical interpretive approach to study the backpacker tourism phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, the focus lies on the understanding, which is reflected in the interpretivist approach. However, this thesis follows the call of Tribe (2006), who argued for tourism studies to not only focus on the interpretivist 'how' (understanding), but also needs to engage with the 'why'. This would enable finding possible explanations for the observed social phenomena (Grix 2010), linking to Max Weber's (Weber 1947; 1921) sociological concept of *erklärendes Verstehen* (explanatory understanding). Doolin and McLeod (2005, p. 244) explained that critical interpretivism constructs a "detailed, local and situated empirical interpretation" and then connects it "to broader considerations of power and control". This is exactly what the research aim sets out to do about the tourism actors in the local communities in Colombia. The approach therefore served the purpose of the research aim and to answer the research questions.

Further adding to this, many times the observed events within the social world do not reveal everything, which is why it is important to look beneath the surface to uncover underlying human agency and social structures (Hay 1995). These structures affect, but at the same time are also affected by the actors. Therefore the focus of the theoretical framework of this study lies on both the actors (backpackers, businesses, governmental actors) with their individual beliefs and understandings of the tourism phenomenon, as well as their social, cultural and political embeddedness as the structures they act within. Relating back to both ontology and epistemology, on the one hand, the actors construct their own reality about their agency (and possibly the structures they work and live within). On the other hand, the epistemological standpoint allows for an analysis of the agency the actors perceive to have or not have to work within these structures, and link these to power structures inherent in tourism development.

For tourism research specifically, Ateljevic (2000) called for a more interpretive approach to research economic questions in tourism related issues to gain a richer understanding as well as to give the people affected by it a chance to express their viewpoints. Bianchi (2009), though, warned about focussing too much on interpretation and cultural issues, with the possibility of neglecting the economic side of tourism. As I support the standpoint that social and cultural issues, and the economy are intrinsically linked, which is also reflected in the theoretical framework of this thesis, a critical interpretivist approach is adopted, somewhat situated between Ateljevic's (2000) and Bianchi's (2009) approach, echoing Tribe's (2006) engagement with more critical approaches.

This viewpoint was further reflected in the theoretical framework, bringing the tourism actors together, while the types of embeddedness reflect the (power) structures they act within. The framework was used to inform the methodology of the study, meaning that it provided a basis to choose the appropriate methods to answer the research questions, and to guide the direction of the data collection. It was not used in a deductive way, testing the framework in the study. Rather, the research process could be possibly described as deductive-inductive: while the framework ensured a purposeful data collection, the themes identified in the findings evolved mainly during the data analysis process.

The following section explains how the theoretical framework, and the ontological and epistemological perspectives specifically, informed the methodological approach.

4.3 Methodological Approach: Ethnography

The aim of the study was uncover the nature of the relationship between tourism development and the tourism actors. This means, that the different voices of the tourism actors need to be heard in order to understand the tourism phenomenon better. As the previous section explained, this thesis was not about finding one 'universal truth' about backpacker tourism development in Colombia. Rather, it followed Duffy (2002) who argues for an approach of 'flexible truth', meaning that people construct their social reality and believe in it, rather than there just being one true account. This notion also linked back to the ontological stance and was expressed by the choice of methodology and techniques in the research design. Ethnography realised through interviews and observations shows different views and explanations about the same phenomena.

In order to gain an understanding of the Colombian backpacker tourism phenomena, qualitative research methods linked to ethnography were employed for the data collection. In order to address the research questions, descriptions and perceptions of the backpacker tourism actors and their relationships with and within each other were needed. These descriptions can only be accessed through qualitative methods. Quantitative methods would not have been appropriate as relationships are hard to measure with quantifiable data. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, can be useful to "explore the meanings of people's worlds – the myriad personal impacts [on] impersonal social structures, and the nature and causes of individual behaviour." (Brockington and Sullivan 2003, p. 57) Furthermore, qualitative data generation allowed for a more flexible approach to include the social context in which the data is created (Grix 2010). To take this social context into account, it is of advantage if researchers submerged themselves into the local context, which provides the possibility to uncover underlying issues (Miles, Huberman and Saldana 2013). It also allows for richer data, complex "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) that are grounded in the local context and provide a more lively account about the studied phenomenon. It therefore provided the appropriate data to address the research questions.

In order to gain this rich data, an ethnographic approach seemed the most appropriate, wherein researchers immerse themselves into a sub-culture in order to identify underlying patterns, for example power relations (Grix, 2010). Although this immersion could be criticised as being less evidence-based and more about the researcher expressing

personal opinions, through the choice of data collection methods, data triangulation, as well as personal reflection of the researcher, a more objective view could be insured. The following section scrutinises the ethical considerations of this study.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

A researcher also becomes a social actor in the situation studied, especially during ethnographic fieldwork, as it leads to a closer engagement in the life of the participants (Coffey 1999; Wilson 1992). This could influence the way the researcher interacts with the study's participants and the other way around (Scheyvens and Storey 2003). It was therefore crucial that I made my identity as a researcher clear to all participants at all times[28], except for the ethnographic observations. In the observation case, it serves to verify or falsify claims people make about themselves or others, or their businesses. This is common in research, called triangulation of methods to make the data as objective as possible in that manner (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Even though there has been criticism of covert observation being deceiving (Coser 1959), covert observation is not deemed unethical in certain cases as long as it is not interfering on a personal level (University of Kent, Kent Business School 2014). As I was conducting the observations in public spaces such as hostels, restaurants, streets, and during touristic activities, I would argue that this was not ethically questionable. Conversely, covert participant observation can benefit the data collection greatly, as the researcher is an insider to the studied phenomenon, therefore decreasing the risk of modified behaviour of the study participants (Roulet *et al.* 2017). Furthermore, as in the case of this thesis, I could also experience the backpacker tourism phenomenon as a backpacker myself, just as the study participants would (Roulet *et al.* 2017). To gain insightful data through observation, I ensured a low visibility as a researcher in the research locations and communities (Crang and Cook 2007), by travelling as a backpacker, staying in hostels and using the provided tourism infrastructure purposefully. This served to collect observational data through participant observation and personal experiences that were noted in the field diary. This helped to get a better insight and gain further understanding of the backpacker's world.

[28] For a further sociological discussion on how present oneself in the work place, which in this case is during field work, see Goffman (1959).

As for the participants of the study, while designing and executing the research, I followed the ethical guidelines as outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as much as possible. The guidelines are made up of informed consent, privacy, harm and exploitation. Cloke *et al.* (2004) further add sensitivity to cultural differences and gender. These concepts are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

For the interviews it was especially important to obtain informed consent from potential participants, and the research aims of the study and main research question were explained to them in detail (Wilson 1992). I followed Price's (2001) recommendation explaining the research objectives in a clear and simple language to potential participants to ignite interest in the research and ensure their participation in the first place. I decided against a consent form that the participants had to sign, as in previous fieldwork in Colombia some respondents were reluctant to sign such a form. A form made the whole interviewing process more formalised, and they were just interested in sharing their views with me without signing an official looking document. This might be culturally grounded in a general mistrust in their governmental institutions, as some respondents had explained to me in previous fieldwork. Furthermore, if a possible respondent cannot read or write, as is possible in rural areas in LDCs, making them read and sign a form could embarrass them[29] and keep them from participating in the study, therefore possibly marginalising an already marginalised group in the research. I consequently explained my research verbally to possible participants before they decided on participating or not. For the policy makers, I explained my research objectives to them via email when asking for an interview, and they then gave me their verbal consent before conducting the interview.

To ensure privacy, the interviews and respectively the responses, remained anonymous, and the participants were informed about their anonymity and the confidentiality of their provided information (Wilson, 1992). Anonymity was ensured by not collecting names of the respondents, and allocating them in a randomised number system in any publications and in this thesis. The interview recordings, interview notes and field diary were kept locked away in security lockers during the fieldwork and during the analysis stage, with only me having access to the data. They will also remain in my possession and kept locked away after the completion of the PhD.

[29] The possibility of embarrassing possible study participants is seen as unethical in itself by the researcher.

The insurance of their privacy also plays into the notion of avoiding negative consequences for the participants. Even after agreeing to be interviewed, the participants were free to decide if they wanted to be interviewed in public, for example at a café, semi-public, e.g. in their businesses, or in private, e.g. in their house. They also decided when they wanted to be interviewed. One respondent wanted to share sensitive and potentially dangerous information with me and therefore asked to be interviewed towards the end of my research stay in their community.

Regarding the issue of possible exploitation of the study participants, the business owners especially seemed rather eager to share their views with me, as they told me that they are hardly ever asked on their opinions in regards to backpacker tourism development. Possibly, they were hoping I could influence policy makers with my study. Furthermore, to ensure an exchange of information, I collected email addresses from participants who were interested in the outcome of the study, and I will send them a summary once the PhD is completed. I also left each participant my contact details so they could contact me while on fieldwork and also afterwards, in case they had any questions or would want to revoke their consent.

Lastly, I also tried to pay attention to cultural differences or matters arising due to gender during fieldwork. To assess culturally sensitive situations I used my experiences from previous trips to Colombia. Furthermore, prior to going into the field, I had conversations with Colombian friends to understand the historical and cultural context better that they currently live in, as well as reading Colombian literature and watching Colombian films and TV shows. From them I could garner possible sensitive issues that could arise, such as social status and gender issues. As a researcher, I was aware of the race and class bias issues that might have arisen because of my background as an academic white, middle-class woman from Europe[30]. In order to diminish these issues I applied a few strategies such as dressing rather informally than formal to not create a barrier between the participants and me, primarily in regards to approaching the backpackers and the business owners. Furthermore, I was being very open to them, introducing myself with my first name rather than full name and titles, as this could have also have a negative effect on them, feeling inferior due to their education, for example. When approaching the policy maker, however, I used a more formal approach, in both dress, introduction and general language.

[30] Through conversations with various Colombians, I was aware that within the Colombian society the whiter a person is the higher their social class is perceived; a relic from the colonial times that is still often reflected in the Colombian social structure.

Wilson (1992) points out that self-awareness about a researcher's ideology and upbringing might reduce a researcher's bias; although it is doubtful if there can be value-free research in general. Both Hall (2004) and Wheeler (2004) challenge this notion of unbiased research. They argue that research is not disembodied and therefore always influenced by the personal that is the researcher. It does not matter if the research is of quantitative nature, which is often perceived to be more objective, or of qualitative nature, but there can never be value-free research, as the outcome is always influenced by the choices the researcher makes. I am well aware of this, but think that I have taken some measures to reduce the bias at least during data collection.

4.5 Research Context

4.5.1 Tourism in Colombia

Colombia was chosen as a research context for a variety of reasons: Firstly, it was a tourism destination that was in development, with different forms of tourism developing parallel to each other, a rather uncommon phenomenon (see Butler 1980). Secondly, backpacker tourism seemed to be thriving in the country, but there was little data available specifically on backpacker tourism. And lastly, I had conducted research and travelled as a backpacker myself in Colombia before, which was advantageous in planning the study.

Due to its recent history, Colombia had only since the early 2000s (re)developed as an international tourism destination. Before that, their civil war impeded tourism due to the general security situation in the country, with paramilitary, military and guerrilla groups fighting against each other and kidnapping Colombians and foreigners for ransom payments. However, since the early 2000s and Colombia's war on drugs, a generally improved security situation had led to tourism since then developing for both domestic and international travellers (Steiner and Vallejo 2010), including backpacker tourism.

Colombia therefore made for an interesting case study, as different kinds of tourism were developing in parallel instead of sequentially, as proposed by Butler's (1980) tourism life cycle. Colombia's geographical location, linking Central and South America meant that it had been incorporated into the popular independent travel route called "Gringo Trail" (Hampton 2013) as soon as the security situation in the country improved. Along with

backpacker tourism, cruise tourism on the Caribbean coast as well as other forms of mass tourism were developing in certain parts of the country (ProColombia 2017). However, this thesis only focussed on backpacker tourism as it is small-scale tourism that often locals participate in and run their own businesses, in contrast to cruise and mass tourism, which is often foreign-owned (Hampton 2003, 1998). Backpacker tourism in Colombia therefore offered the context for this study to assess power relations between the different tourism actors for small-scale tourism in a developing country. Furthermore, this thesis provided useful data on the tourism development of a country where detailed tourism data was lacking, especially in the sector of backpacker tourism.

There was only general data available on tourism in Colombia, with little distinction into sectors or niches. In 2014, almost 2.3 million foreign visits were registered at the Colombian border (Centro de Información Turística – CITUR 2015). That was an increase of 11% in comparison to 2013 (in comparison with a worldwide growth of 4.7%). Even though no official statistics existed just regarding tourism, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (2015) calculated that in 2014 commerce, hotels and restaurants provided about 27 % of all employment in Colombia, and contributed about 12% to the national GDP. Therefore, tourism in general can be seen as an important economic contributor in Colombia, with potential to grow.

ProColombia (ProColombia 2015) identified the key markets for incoming tourism into Colombia as the US, making up more than 19% of the tourist arrivals in 2014, the EU (more than 16%, especially from Spain, Germany and France), and Venezuela (about 14%). They also pointed out that 91% of the visitors in 2014 came from countries with which Colombia has a trade agreement (ProColombia 2015). The key growth origin markets in 2014 were the EU with an increase of 20%, Canada (18%), Mexico (17%) and arrivals from Chile growing by 16% (ProColombia 2015). There was, however, no official data available on the reason for travel, so that the number of backpackers, for example, could not be assessed from these numbers. Nevertheless, the data available showed that other Latin American countries are important and growing origin markets, and one can therefore assume, also for backpacker tourism.

On a governmental and administrative level, Colombia was organised into a three-tiered system. The first tier consisted of the national government with the President as Head of State, and the national Ministries as executive power. Secondly, 32 departments and the capital district of Bogotá formed the Republic of Colombia. The regional governments ruled

these departments. Thirdly, City Halls with their mayors and secretaries formed the local governments (Presidencia de la República 2017). This three-tiered system is reflected throughout the thesis when referred to the governmental actors.

On an institutional and governmental scale, tourism was situated within the administrative division of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (*Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo*). The ministry was concerned with supporting and encouraging business activities in production, services and technology, as well as improving the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism regions in Colombia (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo Colombia 2017a). The vice-ministry of tourism was subordinated to the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo Colombia 2017b). It officially primarily ensured the quality and sustainability of tourism development, directed the analysis of tourism data, and the promotion of tourism (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism 2017a).

There are two governmental agencies that were associated to the Ministry that provide services to and for the tourism industry. Firstly, ProColombia (formerly known as ProExport Colombia) was the governmental trade office, and its responsibilities lied within tourism exports and foreign direct investments, and the country's brand in general. It provided information and studies to potential investors and tourism entrepreneurs (ProColombia 2017). Secondly, FONTUR (*Fondo Nacional del Turismo* – National Tourism Fund) was a federal special fund intended to manage the resources acquired through certain taxes and duties (FONTUR 2017). The funds were used for the promotion of Colombia as a tourism destination, increase competitiveness, as well as support other tourism projects such as infrastructure. Projects could be submitted by the ministry itself, ProColombia, tourism guilds and committees, as well as departmental or local governmental organisations, and would then need approval by the FONTUR Steering Committee (FONTUR 2017). Whereas ProColombia was concerned with rather external factors, FONTUR is more about internal projects and promotions within Colombia. Data from both agencies, but specifically from ProColombia, provided more context about the tourism development in Colombia.

Finally, another reason for choosing Colombia as the research setting was that I already possessed 'pre-knowledge' of the location (Hampton 2003), having earlier experience in Colombia both as a backpacker and as a researcher, travelling as a solo backpacker during 2011, and conducting research for my Master's dissertation in one of the research locations in 2012 (Thieme 2012). I therefore knew the tourism structure of the country well

and could evaluate possible research locations as well as timings, for example for getting from one place to another. Both previous trips further provided me with some initial contacts into the backpacker tourism industry that I could build upon while organising and conducting fieldwork.

4.5.2 Choice of Research Locations

The research was conducted in two different rural areas to trace possible developmental differences between the regions and to compare them. Urban areas were left out of the study as there were many other factors influencing the development of these areas in tourism. Furthermore, due to financial and time constraints, only a limited number of research locations could be chosen. Since rural locations were often excluded from PE research (Ferguson 2011), I decided to address this issue with this study as well. The research locations were both popular backpacker destinations that I chose due to my previous experience as a researcher as well as through preliminary research on popular backpacker destinations in Colombia on travel websites such as *Lonely Planet*'s Thorn Tree forum (2013) and travel blogs such as Indietraveller (2014).

Both research locations exhibited unique cultural and geographical attractions that appealed to different kinds of backpackers, which are assessed later in this thesis. Furthermore, the locations serviced different entry points into the country, with most international flights arriving to Bogotá, some North American flights as well as sailing boats from Panama arriving to the Caribbean coast. Therefore it was decided that the research locations were Taganga on the Caribbean Coast (Northern Colombia) and Salento in the coffee-growing region, more towards the centre of Colombia (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Research locations. Source: Nations Online Project. Usage granted for educational purposes.

4.5.3 Research Location 1: Taganga

The first research location was a small village on the Caribbean coast called Taganga, consisting of about 5,000 inhabitants. Taganga was located near the historic city of Santa Marta, the first permanent settlement of Spanish colonists in Colombia, of which Taganga was legally an entity of (Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2017). Taganga itself was a traditional fishing village that had been a popular destination for Latin American backpackers since the 1970s, which the locals call, in a non-disrespectful way, hippies. It had also become more and more popular with international backpackers since the early 2000s, and could even be described as a backpacker enclave (Thieme 2012). There were many hostels, restaurants, dive centres and tour companies catering to backpackers. Culturally, the people of the Caribbean, the so-called *costeños*, were perceived as laid back, also in their approach to work. As a distinctive local feature, the village's culture was defined by matriarchy, a remnant from the nearby living Wayúu indigenous people (Grupo Etnográfico Vanderbilt University n.d.). In the past decades, as the men were and are out fishing all day, the women had taken on central economic roles within the village such as running the restaurants on the various beachfronts.

4.5.4 Research Location 2: Salento

Salento was a small town of about 7,000 inhabitants (DANE 2005) in the Andes mountains, with a main plaza surrounded by old colonial buildings making up the heart of the village. It was located in the middle of the so-called *eje cafetero* (translation by author: coffee triangle), the coffee-growing region in the Colombian highlands. The main income generator was agriculture, especially producing coffee, and then followed by tourism according to the City Hall (Interview 27, 2015). The people of the Colombian highland the so-called *paisas*, were known throughout their country as hard working with entrepreneurial spirit (Twinam 1980). This might have been a factor influencing their decision to participate in tourism development given the long working hours within the tourism and hospitality industries.

Salento was chosen as one of the research locations as it had become popular with backpackers since the mid-2000s. As with statistics on backpacker tourism across the country, there was no data available on the numbers of backpackers coming to Salento. Nevertheless, a viable tourism infrastructure catering to them had developed, such as various hostels and activities on offer that attract the backpackers. The area was known for its natural beauty, outstanding hiking in the nearby National Park *Los Nevados*, and visiting or staying at coffee *fincas* and learning about the process of coffee growing. There were different routes for the backpackers into the village, such as taking a bus from the capital Bogotá (about 8 hours), or from the Southern city of Calí (about 5 hours), or the second largest city of the country, Medellín (about 7 hours). There were also small airports in nearby Armenia and Pereira, with domestic flights from both Bogotá and Medellín, and even international flights to the United States. These transport links were important as the town was frequented by backpackers coming from the South, for example travelling from Ecuador, from the North (Medellín), and also by tourists initially arriving to Bogotá.

These two geographically and culturally different communities provided useful and significant case studies to compare the tourism development and how their tourism businesses as well as the backpacker and governmental actors reacted to and are affected by this development.

4.6 Fieldwork Period

The data collection was carried out over the course of about three months, between early January 2015 and late March 2015. This time period was chosen as the end of December and especially January is the main holiday and travelling season in South America. Also it was during the time of the university holidays in most Latin American countries. I therefore expected to encounter the most Latin American backpackers during this time of the year, since they were often students as explained in the introduction of this thesis. February and March, the shoulder season, was a more convenient time to talk to tourism entrepreneurs, as they were less busy, and policy makers that would normally be back in their offices.

I arrived in Colombia already in late December 2014 and stayed with local friends in the capital of Bogotá for about 10 days before starting fieldwork. This helped me to ease back into the country's culture and back into mainly speaking Spanish, which I speak at an advanced level. It also helped avoiding some of the initial culture shock that has been described by other researchers when they arrived for their fieldwork in developing countries (Leslie and Storey 2003).

The actual fieldwork started in Salento on January 5th 2015 and ended in this location on February 10th 2015, collecting data in the community in a total of about 5 weeks. I had reached what Glaser and Strauss (1968) call "theoretical saturation", where not much new information was generated. Additionally, my fieldwork had been limited due to time and financial constraints, as well as university obligations; aspects that Letkeman (1978) called external factors for leaving the field. Apart from reaching saturation point of the data collection, I had felt accepted in the community, built friendships and generally felt well in the town. Leaving this field side evoked some feelings of sadness, which is not uncommon among researchers (Kindon and Cupples 2003). Even though Kindon and Cupples (2003) suggested that if researchers have only conducted fieldwork for short periods of time[31] their relationships within the researched community might only stay rather functional. However, this might depend on the situation of the researcher and also on the closeness of the researcher to their study participants. As I had been rather close to the research participants, both the backpackers and building friendships with some local business owners, I saw them as more than just functional research subjects. I therefore took the time to properly say goodbye to them, sharing dinners with some, instead of leaving like

[31] Spending about 5 weeks in each location can be considered a relative short amount of time for fieldwork, especially in anthropology and development studies.

after a business transaction. Nevertheless, Kindon and Cupples (2003) also pointed out that there is no right way to leaving the field, which will always depend on the nature of the research as well as the general context.

To counteract these feelings of sadness I felt when leaving Salento, I decided to spend a few days in the city of Medellín on the way to the next research location, to get my mind away from leaving this familiar place that I felt very connected to. I then arrived to Taganga on February 14th 2015, and eased into the data collection there by attending an organised tour for backpackers to the nearby carnival in Barranquilla the same weekend. This provided a joyous celebration to start my fieldwork in Taganga, in a location that I was slightly dreading beforehand due to its hot and humid climate, and due to the concern that I will not have as good as a fieldwork experience there as I had in Salento. This day trip then also provided me with valuable, initial contacts of backpackers and tourism businesses for the remainder of the fieldwork there. I left Taganga after also about 5 weeks on March 21st 2015 after reaching the saturation stage (Glaser and Strauss 1968) here too[32]. I spent another few days in the capital of Bogotá with friends to ease out of leaving the field before flying back to the UK to return to university.

Cupples and Kindon (2003) point out that returning to university could entail a reversed culture shock, which could affect the ability (or inability) to write. I did not experience much of this, but felt sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of data and by certain issues that I felt I had only half understood (such as some of the conflicts between the paramilitary and the local communities). I therefore also took time to read up on these topics while starting with the transcription of the interviews. When some information was unclear, I could also refer back to some of the friends I had made in both researched communities. The time transcribing the interviews, even though somewhat tedious at times, also gave me the time to reflect, digest and process the fieldwork experience, as well as re-living some of them through the interviews and other data collected. Cupples and Kindon (2003) argue that taking time to reflect is very important, not the least because as researchers we need to decide on how we represent the researched people and places in our writing.

[32] The saturation stage was reached at least considering backpackers and business owners, not regarding policy makers, as there was little to no interest shown, as explained later in this chapter.

4.7 Access and Participant Selection

The selection of participants was done in a mixture of what is often described as convenience (Ferber 1977) and as a purposive selection (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003) . On one hand, the participation depends on the availability, the willingness to participate in the study. In some cases of the backpackers, it also depended on the nationality of the participants, since I one aim of the study was to include Latin American backpackers.

The backpackers were approached at hostels, restaurants and cafes, as well as during touristic activities. Duffy (2002) has found that tourists were more open to participate in her study when they knew the researcher from shared activities, as research sounded like a mental effort to them when they just wanted to relax. The interviews were mostly conducted immediately when approached; some were postponed to a later, more convenient time for the travellers. The interviews took place in a leisure environment such as on the beach or the hostel gardens to ensure more of a holiday atmosphere and less of a (laboratory) research setting. This could lead to more genuine answers and respondents opening up. For interviewing tourists, Duffy (2002) also found that rainy days provided to be fruitful as the travellers had nothing better to do, a notion that my fieldwork experience can support, especially after some rainy afternoons in Salento. In regards to their nationalities, as this study aimed to explicitly compare Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers; sometimes Latin American backpackers were specifically approached to gain a greater sample of this group, as there were fewer of them than non-Latin American travellers.

For the business owners and entrepreneurs, there was also some purposeful sampling involved. They were pre-selected according to if their business seemed to primarily cater to backpackers, as well as according to the aforementioned factors of willingness to participate. For the pre-selection, I thereby relied on my own experience as a backpacker on former research experience and guidance from earlier researchers (Hampton 2003; 1998 in Indonesia; Howard, 2007; 2005 in Thailand; Brenner and Fricke 2007 in Mexico), and on web searches on backpacker portals such as HostelWorld.com. Furthermore, through ‘snowballing’ I was introduced by participating business owners to further study participants. This was also achieved by first interviewing important and respected business owners of an area who could be seen as ‘gate keepers’. The interviews were either

conducted spontaneously if the business owners or an employee had time to do so, or an appointment was set up for later or another day.

Some researchers, such as Hart (2001), Price (2001) and Scheyvens *et al.* (2003), have pointed out the importance of building rapport with the local community. Hart (2001) describes her initial struggles during fieldwork in Latin America and in the Latin American community in the US that since she was a young single woman it made it sometimes harder to access data. One the one hand, she received too much unwanted attention from males and they did not take her seriously. On the other hand the local women thought she wanted to get involved with their men. In situations like this, both Price (2001) and Scheyvens *et al.* (2003) suggest modest and culturally appropriate dress, and no socialising alone with men. Hart (2001) also found it particularly helpful to interact more with the women in their daily lives, which eventually built trust and they would then provide access to the men and encourage them to participate in the research. Scheyvens *et al.* (2003) also propose to show appreciation of local knowledge by asking potential participants to teach them a skill. In former fieldwork asking the local fishermen to teach her their card game proved to be very successful (Thieme 2012). Keeping the suggestions of the other researchers in mind, this time, as some of the participants already knew me from previous research, some access into the community was easier, especially in Taganga. In Salento, for example, rapport building was ensured through my hobby of cooking. I provided one of the popular backpacker restaurants with a cake recipe of mine, which they then made and put on the evening menu (and it sold out). Furthermore, just having informal conversations with their employees, and generally showing an interest in their lives, such as going shopping with them to see where their supply chains are, or interacting with their pets, proved to be useful to build rapport and also to gain a better understanding of the general context the business owners and employees live in. As for unwanted male attention, this was not much of a problem in Salento, but more on the Caribbean coast that is notorious for the men being very open in approaching women. I therefore wore a fake wedding ring to shut down unwanted advances, also from possible study participants.

A very small number of interviews (n=2) was conducted with local and regional policy makers in Salento. The interviews with officials were pre-arranged via email and through personal contacts of some tourism businesses. In Taganga, no policy maker responded to emails or phone calls. It has to be noted though, that during the time of fieldwork the

position of tourism secretary in the municipality was vacant, and new elections of the City Hall took place about 6 months after finishing fieldwork. Even though I contacted the newly elected tourism secretary two months after the election, they still did not react to my emails. I therefore had to solely rely on tourism policy papers and official documents for local and regional governmental data on Taganga.

4.8 Data Collection Methods

4.8.1 Interviews

The main part of the data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with respondents from the main three tourism actors. In total, n=53 interviews with n=71 respondents were conducted (see Appendix 1 for a table overview).

In Salento, a total of n=28 interviews were conducted, which split into the following numbers:

- n=12 interviews with n=21 backpackers
- n=14 interviews with n=14 backpacker tourism business owners
- n=2 interviews with n=3 local and regional policy makers

In Taganga, a total of n=24 interviews with n=33 people were conducted. These interviews were split into the following:

- n=11 interviews with n=19 backpackers
- n=13 interviews with n=14 backpacker tourism business owners and employees
- n=0 interviews local and regional policy makers

Interviews are suitable to uncover people's perceptions, understandings and their reasoning behind them, and therefore serve better for my purpose than, for example, questionnaires (Cloke *et al.* 2004). Since interviews are synchronous in time and place, the answers from the interviewees are spontaneous and less reflective, meaning

participants cannot carefully craft their answers but rather spontaneously share their perceptions and feelings of a topic (Opdenakker 2006). This, though, requires more concentration from the researcher as they need to react fast to the answers, as well as listen and evaluating the depth and response of the answer at the same time (Opdenakker 2006). As I had previous interview experience, I was aware of this limitation. To ensure full concentration no more than 3 interviews were conducted daily.

In interviews, participants can express their viewpoints in their own words, without having ideas or phrases put into their mouths like possible with surveys or questionnaires (Bernard 1988). They can therefore be seen as more of an account of what the participant wanted to say instead of what the researcher wanted to hear. Furthermore, Opdenakker (2006) points out that additional information can be extracted from the participant through social cues such as their body language and their intonation. However, the interviewer should also be aware of their own messages they send through their voice or body language, in order not to lead the interviewee to certain responses (Opdenakker 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), something I was aware of and attempted to minimise by being conscious of it.

The core questions were prepared in three different interview guidelines for the three main actors, the backpackers, business owners and policy makers (see Appendix 2 for interview guidelines). They were based on the research aim and questions, the literature review, and guided by the theoretical framework. This was useful as there was usually only one chance to interview a participant, and with the guideline at hand I was well prepared. It also provided continuity throughout all of the interviews, ensured that all topics would be covered and made sure that I remained in control of the conversation as I want to cover my agenda (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Moreover, a clear set of topics provides clear, reliable and comparative data in the end (Bernard 1988). A small pilot study (n=2) with ex-backpackers from Europe and Latin America was conducted prior the field work to test out the core questions and ensure correct translation of the interview guides into Spanish.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provided the flexible approach necessary to allow the required topics to be covered. It also let me as the researcher incorporate new topics that might be mentioned during the interviews (Crang and Cook 2007) or delve into topics mentioned by the respondent that could be interesting to the research. The questions of the interviews consisted of open and closed questions (Cloke *et al.* 2004). The closed

questions served to raise demographic data such as nationality, age group and occupation. Due to the lack of even baseline data on backpackers in Colombia, this data was collected to even just get an idea of the characteristics of backpackers, but also the tourism business owners. These questions, asked at the beginning of the interview, were designed to ease into the interviews as some people might feel uncomfortable at first to being interviewed due to lack of experience (Cloke *et al.* 2004). They can therefore create a more trusting atmosphere between the researcher and the interviewee (Crang and Cook 2007). After that, open questions, also called non-directive questions, that "are designed as triggers that stimulate the interviewee into talking about a particular broad area" (Hammersely and Atkinson 1995, p. 152) were used to address the core issues, and further ease into the interview. The tourism business owners were asked to describe how they came about running their business; the backpackers were asked to describe their travels in Colombia so far. In general, open questions should also avoid leading the respondents to certain answers (Cloke *et al.* 2004; Crang and Cook 2007), providing therefore more of an understanding of what the respondent was thinking at that time.

In addition to one-on-one interviews, I conducted some interviews with two or three backpackers at the same time. As I knew from my previous personal travel and research experience, it can be hard to catch them by themselves for one-on-one interviews at times, so I had anticipated for small group interviews to happen. As well, a group interview can stimulate some discussion amongst the travellers and maybe reveal further insights (Cloke *et al.* 2004; Crang and Cook 2007). The interviewing of more than one participant at the same time was only conducted if the backpackers had already known each other beforehand (e.g. were a couple, travel together or shared a dorm) to minimise shyness around their answers. I had previously conducted interviews in this form and the data from these did not seem to be skewed in any particular way than when interviewing the backpackers by themselves.

The interviews were primarily conducted in Spanish and English, with a few interviews with German backpackers being held in my native language, German. The interview guidelines for all three tourism actors were translated into Spanish prior to fieldwork, and checked by a Spanish native speaker for accuracy. I speak Spanish at an advanced level and have previously conducted interviews for a study for my Master's dissertation in Spanish (Thieme 2012); thus it was fairly easy to conduct the interviews myself. An interpreter was not used as this could have created a barrier between the researcher and the participants

(Bujra 2006) or could have skewed the findings through their translations (Leslie and Storey 2003). E. Cohen (2006) found that it is also easier to immerse into a culture if the researcher speaks the language. After conducting the interviews, they were all translated into English by me. By not using an interpreter I was therefore the only one influencing the data, by designing the questions, translating the findings, and analysing these.

The interviews were recorded on a digital device if consent was given by the participants. Most participants agreed to be recorded. I was already familiar with the equipment as I had used it for my previous fieldwork. Additionally to the recordings, notes were taken, which included the main points made by the interviewee, so I could ask additional questions on certain topics without interrupting them, and to have a rough structure for the transcribing of the interviews already. Both the recordings and the notes were regularly digitally backed up as on my password-protected laptop that was locked away in a secure locker in both research locations.

4.8.2 Ethnographic observation

As mentioned further above, ethnographic observation serves mainly for triangulation, to verify or falsify information given during the interviews. “This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating” (Maxwell 2012, p. 106). Therefore, apart from confirming information given, for example, in interviews, triangulation can also provide more data. This was especially helpful for more sensitive topics such as financial issues, including expenditure patterns, without asking the backpackers directly. Money questions can be a sensitive topic for some, as I had previously experienced in a research setting (Thieme 2012), so I could avoid asking directly by observing and noting down expenditures of different backpackers in the field diary.

Furthermore, observation was utilised to get additional information on tourism businesses, such as estimations of sizes of businesses, the number of businesses in general, or how popular certain activities seem to be. It also served to observe the interaction of backpackers with business owners and employees, as well as other members of the community. These observations provided valuable insights into social and some cultural

patterns, and insights into power relations between the actors and how they were acted out on a day-to-day basis.

All observations as well as personal reflections were noted in a field diary (Hammersely and Atkinson 1995). The diary was written almost daily. If it was not written daily, it was reflected upon the next day. The diary writing included observations regarding the backpackers, the tourism businesses, and the communities in general, as well as additional snippets of information from informal conversations. It also included personal reflections, both on the research as well as on my general feelings, as suggested by Leslie and Storey (2003), to deal with positive and negative experiences and feelings while in the field.

The research side of the field diary was enhanced by some site mapping drawn by myself. Furthermore, I collected business cards and flyers from tourism businesses and included them into the field diary as well. It was further enriched by photographs taken in the research locations that showed backpacker tourism infrastructure, backpacker activities, and general life in the research locations.

4.8.3 Supporting methods

A map of Colombia was given to the backpackers in the beginning of the interviews, and they were asked to draw their travel route in Colombia into the map, including locations that they had already visited and locations that they intended to visit during their trip (Hampton and Hamzah 2016). This activity served as an icebreaker activity to get the conversation of the interview started. This mapping activity proved to be very popular with the backpackers, with some being surprised by the geography of their own travel route, and others asking for an additional map for themselves as a keepsake. For the data, the maps provided useful information on tourism flows throughout the country, as well as information of entry and exit points of the backpackers, and their length of stay in the research location.

At the research locations, the town/village and the tourism businesses were mapped at get a better sense of place and the influence of tourism development in the area. The mapping

was also supported by taking photographs of certain locations to illustrate tourism development and the role of the businesses in the community.

Furthermore, to gain more background information and also for data triangulation, documents on tourism policies were examined, along with the limited existing statistical data. The analysis of tourism policy documents proved to be essential in Taganga, as there no policy maker was interested in speaking to me. Current as well as past policy documents were used in the analysis (where available), as they would also show the local and regional government's support of the tourism development over a period of time.

Additionally, in order to track the tourism development in the research locations as well as the perception of these locations, travel guidebooks, travel blogs and travel rating websites were monitored. This also provided additional indicative and supporting data about the possible popularity of certain hostels, restaurant and activities in both communities to support my own observations.

4.9 Data Analysis

The interview recordings and notes, the fill-in maps, and the field diary along with the site mapping and digital photographs, as well as the policy documents provided the key data to be analysed upon returning to the UK, with the most information extracted from the interviews. I did not start the transcribing of the interviews at the research locations, as I rather wanted to use my limited time there for the actual data collection. The transcribing on location could be useful to clear up any questions that might arise when going back to the data. However, since I took parallel notes during the interviews that I re-read regularly, I was also able to clarify issues while still in the field.

Before starting the data collection, I created a short list of codes, which are "labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles *et al.* 2014, p. 71). This process is called deductive coding, where the researcher derives a list of initial codes resulting from the theoretical framework, the research aim and questions, and the interview guidelines (Miles *et al.* 2014). During the fieldwork and the process of analysis codes were amended and added, to allow, for example, local factors to be included in the analysis, and thematically grouped. Therefore

a hybrid of deductive and inductive theme development was used, as described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006).

Upon returning to the UK, I transcribed and translated the interviews into English (see Appendix 3 for sample transcript). I then ascribed the pre-determined codes to the interview transcript, along with other materials such as notes in the field diary of the observations, site maps, tourism flow maps and photos. Even though software such as *NVivo*, a multi-input software tool and the leading software in analysing qualitative data, was available and I had received some training on the programme, I felt that I would get more out of manual coding; a concern that was mirrored in Basit's (2003) study comparing manual and electronic coding of qualitative data. Saldaña (2015), an advocate for manual coding for early-career researchers, points out that manual coding on paper would give the researcher more control and ownership of the data analysis. Coding on print-outs would also allow reviewing the data in new ways such as using sticky notes, grouping them together etc. (Saldaña 2015). Furthermore, Silver and Lewins (2014) argued that after all, it is the researcher that does the thinking, not the programme. I therefore decided to analyse the data manually, using different coloured highlighter pens as well as sticky notes. This also allowed me to view that data in the context, especially considering the interviews; instead of just reading snippets from them, I could trace in which context certain quotes were made.

I defined my cases by research location and by type of tourism actor (backpacker, business, or governmental actor), a process Cloke *at al.* (2004) call entitation. Furthermore, the interviewees were then defined according to their origin (local, other Colombian or foreigner), their age group, and their gender. I then applied a technique of "free coding", looking for repeated ideas in the transcripts and field diary, and emerging themes and patterns. I used the themes previously identified through the framework of the thesis as a guideline, such as social relations between the backpackers, social relations between the businesses, and social relations between the backpackers and the locals. I also added new ones while analysing the data, for example themes around the shadow industries.

I then integrated the other data, such as the policy documents, photographs and maps into the data analysis process, searching for a repetition of the themes I had identified in the interviews to support them or find differing accounts, for example in the policy documents. From the analysis of this data, no new themes arose.

The data transcription and analysis was a long a tedious process, that I would plan ahead more thoroughly in a future research project, possibly incorporating using a software programme like *NVivo* straight from the beginning, even in the literature review stage. However, the analysis allowed me to re-live some of the experiences I had in the field, and I sometimes felt a sense of gratefulness that so many people had given their time and opinions so freely to me. This was motivation enough to push on.

4.10 Trustworthiness of Data – Validity, Generalisability, Reliability and Objectivity

Even though Van Maanen (2011) argued that the concept of reliability and validity should be replaced with the concept of apparency and verisimilitude in ethnographic research, I will still comment on the traditional concepts as Van Maanen's (2011) suggestions have not caught on (yet) in publications or ethnographic accounts[33], and Miles et al. (2014, p. 313) argued that these terms are still used as they would "suggest a more rigorous stance toward our work". Decrop (1999), on the other hand, advocated for the concept of trustworthiness in tourism research, which combines the traditional concepts into one overarching one to assess qualitative data. He proposed four criteria to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative studies, based on credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity).

Concerning the credibility or internal validity, Decrop (1999) referred to the truthfulness of the findings, whereas Hammersley (1991) simply used the term validity interchangeably with 'truth'. He recognised its limits though, stating that we can never know for certain if an account given by a participant is true as we as researchers would also not have access to the true reality (Hammersley 1991). This stance is also reflected in the philosophical position of this thesis. However, the validity of the data provided by the research participants can be judged by the extend of supporting evidence, such as similar accounts from other participants or data triangulation through other sources of data. Some claims could be accepted by the researcher due to their own experiences without much need for confirmation while others would need more evidence to support them, in order to avoid

[33] Reliability, validity and generalisability in qualitative and ethnographic studies have been discussed for various decades; for a discussion see for example Lofland (1972), Guba and Lincoln (1982), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Kirk and Miller (1986), Hammersley (1991), Brewer (2000), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007).

misinterpretation by the researcher (Hammersley 1991; Long and Johnson 2000). In order to have some sort of control over the validity of the data of this thesis, I mainly used data triangulation, for example judging statements made by participants against other sources such as newspaper articles or policy papers. This is a mix of traditional data triangulation, using a variety of data sources (Decrop 1999) such as participant interviews, field diary, and newspaper articles, as well as method triangulation (Decrop 1999) such as interviewing, ethnographic observation, and policy document analysis.

Triangulation would further "[enhance a] study's generalizability" (Decrop 199, p.158) or its external validity to transfer it to other settings. However, it is important to recall that ethnography is about the study of one or a few small-scale cases, and the description and explanation of the events and phenomena observed in those cases (Hammersley 1991). Ward Schofield (2002) argued that generalisability has often been ignored by ethnographers, or is not seen as an aim for ethnographic studies. However, Atkinson (2015) pointed out that ethnography does not just produce a series of isolated case studies that have nothing in common. It is concerned with the development of generic concepts or models that do not only apply to the local setting, but could rather be employed to a variety of social settings (Atkinson, 2015). For this thesis, I followed Atkinson's (2015) stance, further supported by Guba and Lincoln (1982, p. 238): "Generalizations are impossible since phenomena are neither time- not context-free (although some transferability of these hypotheses may be possible from situation to situation, depending on the degree of contextual and temporal similarity)." I was developing a framework that could be the basis of further studies in a different temporal and contextual setting. However, I am aware that the detailed findings of the study are grounded in their context and not necessarily generalizable, for example to other research locations. Miles et al. (2014) therefore advocated to include sufficient "thick description" (Geertz 1973) in order for the reader to decide themselves if the findings could be transferable to other settings. This approach is also reflected in the following findings chapters of this thesis.

Thirdly, regarding dependability or data reliability, Hammersley (1991, p. 67) defined reliability as "the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions." He acknowledged the involvement of the researcher in the process, which quantitative studies

would often not (Hammersley 1991). Regarding ethnographic studies, validity would mostly be expressed through the stability of data collection measures (Long and Johnson 2000) and that the process of the study is consistent (Miles et al 2014). This is often achieved through, for example, interview guidelines (Long and Johnson 2000), which is the measure I have used to establish a certain consistency in topics throughout the interviews with the research participants. This ensured that the data showed meaningful parallels across different sources, times and participants (Miles et al. 2014).

Finally, Decrop (1999) argued for confirmability or objectivity of the data, which concerned itself with neutrability and researcher bias, as the researcher as self would also need addressing (Decrop 1999). He argued thereafter that confirmability and a reduction in researcher bias could be achieved through reflexivity of the researcher, which can be achieved through writing a field diary and practising reflexive writing (Decrop 2004). I have taken these measures throughout the data collection process, as well as discussion findings with other senior researcher once I was out of the field, to check if I had interpreted the data as neutral as possible. However, as explained earlier in this chapter under 4.4, I was aware of my bias and tried to mitigate it as much as possible while also in the field.

By taking the assessment criteria of trustworthiness as defined by Decrop (1999) into account, I would therefore argue that the data collected, analysed and written up was adhering to the criteria, and therefore demonstrated truth value (Erlandson et al 1993).

4.11 Summary

This chapter critically discussed the ethnographic tourism fieldwork to address the research objectives of the thesis. It covered the philosophical approach and topics on ethics, before then turning to the practical data collection, arguing for the choices of research methods and techniques that were used. After the analysis process was outlined, the trustworthiness of the data was discussed and assessed. The following chapter will now present the principal findings of the study, divided up into both research locations.

5 Explorations of Embeddedness of Tourism Development in Taganga

5.1 Introduction

> *"Taganga is something of a cautionary tale about the overdevelopment of small towns. What was once a tiny fishing village set in a beautiful, deep, horseshoe-shaped bay 5km northeast of Santa Marta, seemed to have hit the jackpot when it became a big backpacker destination a decade ago. It drew a diverse crowd of locals and travellers, and led to the creation of a new middle-class of hostel, restaurant and other small-business owners. Business was booming, but many locals found it hard to get a slice of the pie; as a result, drugs began to be sold to the backpackers, and this further socially fragmented the tiny place.*
>
> *Over the past few years, Taganga has gone from a near obligatory stop on the gringo trail to a rather depressing place that looks in part like a bomb has hit it. Poverty is rife, the streets are unsafe after dark and it feels increasingly like a town divided. That said, there are still a number of travellers who continue to come here for cheap accommodations, partying and diving, as well as those who appreciate the small-town vibe here in contrast to the big-city feel of nearby Santa Marta."* (Lonely Planet Website 2016)

The quote summarises some of the issues that Taganga, a village on the Colombian Caribbean coast is facing since backpacker tourism developed. This chapter examines this tourism development in the community. It has seen rapid tourism development over the past 15 years and it could be argued that it is a backpacker tourism enclave (Thieme 2012). The chapter builds on the various actors of the framework of this thesis: the backpackers, the tourism SMEs within the community, and the political actors. First it gives a brief overview of Taganga, including recent history, geography and the village's role in tourism in the area. It then proceeds to outline the influence backpackers have on the community. Thirdly, the historical tourism development and its main drivers in Taganga are examined, and the chapter traces the development of tourism businesses in the community. In the final section, the political economy and power relations underlying the tourism development are analysed. This includes the relationship of tourism with various actors in the community and their reaction to tourism development. The findings presented

in this section build on primary research, mainly consisting of information recorded in n=24 interviews, of whom n=13 were with business owners and employees of Taganga, and n=11 interviews were held with n=20 backpackers who travelled to Taganga, as well as extensive field diaries and field photography, as well as secondary sources such as government documents.

5.2 Background to Taganga

Taganga is a fishing village on the Colombian Caribbean coast, in the department of Magdalena. The number of Taganga's inhabitants was counted as just short of 5,000 in the 2009 census (DADMA-Uni Magdalena, 2009, cited in (Figueroa Cabas 2011). A current official population figure could not be established as the village belongs to the municipality of the neighbouring city of Santa Marta with over 400,000 inhabitants (DANE 2010).

The history of Taganga and Santa Marta dates back to early Spanish colonisation of South America. Santa Marta was founded in 1525 and in 2015 was the second oldest city in South America (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016c). Some of the fishermen of Taganga argued that the settlers arrived to Taganga first, but later settled into the bay of Santa Marta because of its natural harbour. They also claimed that Taganga's church is the oldest in the country (Field Diary, 2012).

According to the City of Santa Marta (2016b), the main economic activities of the city and surrounding district were, in this order, tourism, trade, the harbour, fishery and agriculture. For agriculture, bananas, coffee, cacao and fruits are the main produce with 16,053 tonnes in total per year (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016b). Banana production was initiated by US American companies in the beginning of the 20th century, but decreased significantly later due to the various political and security crises, and was now further decreasing. Nowadays, tourism seemed to be the main income earner for the municipality of Santa Marta, including Taganga; in 2015 the tourism sector (which included commerce, hotels and restaurants) officially provided 34% of employment in the department of Magdalena, followed social and personal services with 24% (DANE 2016).

Santa Marta had been a popular tourism resort since the 1950s, not only for domestic tourists, but also for foreign tourists from the US and Venezuela frequenting the holiday facilities since the 1960s until the 1980s (Belisle and Hoy 1980). The city has seen significant tourism development in the form of high rise beach front hotels and apartment

blocks, especially along the beach of Rodadero two kilometres south of the city centre (Belisle and Hoy 1980; Dann 1984). This development was ongoing and the City of Santa Marta (2016b) listed the construction industry still as one of the most important for the city, apart from the aforementioned ones. Since 2010 major tourism development in the city centre of Santa Marta could be observed, particularly the restoration of colonial buildings as hotels, hostels and restaurants (Field Diary, 2015). In the harbour of Santa Marta cruise ships can dock; in 2014 seven cruises brought just under 4,000 passengers to Santa Marta (Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo Colombia 2015). Furthermore, there was also a yacht harbour with up to over 250 landing places (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016d). It also had a national bus terminal and national airport. There are plans to expand the airport to also receive international flights and bigger airplanes as outlined, but not specified by the Development Plan of the City of Santa Marta (2016e). Regular local bus services ran from the city centre to Taganga and other surrounding villages. However, this bus service was of limited use to tourists as it consists of minibuses with no space for luggage. The more tourist-friendly option to get from Santa Marta to Taganga was to take one of the many taxis.

Taganga, in contrast to Santa Marta, has been a traditional fishing village that has not seen much international tourism development until about 20 years ago. It was visited during the 1980s and 1990s only by a few foreign visitors that are comparable to Cohen's (1972) ‘early drifters’ according to local interview respondents (Business Interview 25, 2015). In the past 15 years, since the early 2000s, the influx of foreign independent travellers has been growing, however. This brought, especially since the mid-2000s, a dramatic growth of tourism facilities catering to foreign travellers which led to somewhat unsupervised construction work and a rapid growth of the village itself (Botero and Zielinski 2010).

Geographically, Taganga was spatially separated from Santa Marta by a small mountain range. The village is set in a horseshoe-shaped bay with a main beach front of approximately 500 metres (see Figures 3 and 4). About half the beach served for bathing, the other half the fishermen use to dock their boats (see Figure 5).

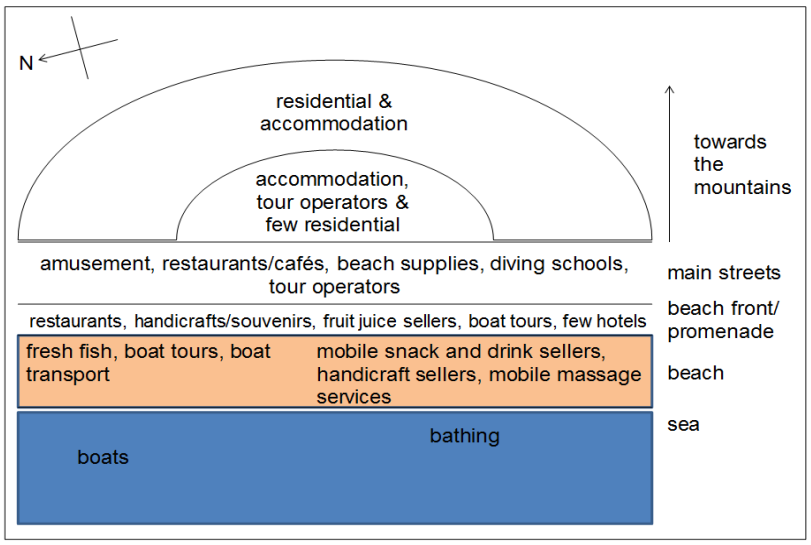

Figure 3: Stylised spatial layout of businesses within Taganga. Source: Author

Figure 4: View into the bay of Taganga from the only access road leading to/from Santa Marta. Source: Author.

Figure 5: Beach front of Taganga as seen from the part used for bathing, looking towards the part used for docking boats. Source: Author.

There was a row of 19 beach front restaurant huts along one side of the beach, where the fishermen dock their boats. These had been constructed by the City government of Santa Marta in 2010 to ensure a more tidy-looking sea front (Business Interview 25, 2015). Observation in the field showed that one of the kiosks was not in use at all, and about five of them were only in use during the weekends. The kiosk closest to the tourist beach was used as tourist information staffed by tourism police, and had public bathrooms. On the street running behind the kiosks there were about six more restaurants and other tourism businesses such as one discotheque and one dive centre, as well as a varying amount of informal tourism businesses (see Figure 6). On the tourist beach there were about three huts selling snacks and drinks, a hostel and a cocktail bar as well as a hotel at each end of this part of the beach.

Figure 6: Street behind restaurant kiosks with street vendors selling handicrafts and juices. Source: Author.

Furthermore, mountains surrounded the village on three sides, leading into the mountain range of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, with its highest elevation, the Pico Cristobál Colón at nearly 6,000 metres, in close proximity. Being enclosed by mountains on three sides somewhat limited the room for spatial expansion of the village. There was another popular beach near the village in a neighbouring bay, Playa Grande, reachable via a short walk over a hill or by boat transport from the main beach. There was an eco-hut hotel complex and about 20 beach front restaurants on Playa Grande, but it was observed that about four of them were not operational. A few smaller bays in the North-Eastern direction towards Tayrona National Park had small beaches too which are mainly used by local fishermen for fishing.

The infrastructure of the village was of relatively poor quality in comparison with neighbouring Santa Marta. The village was provided with electricity, although the supply is somewhat irregular at times, with power shortages not uncommon (Field Diary, 2015):

> *"Sunday, March 8th: […] the power is off, so it is nice and quiet in the village, no loud music played by the neighbours. Can't call my mum then, as the internet is off too. […] I pass by the main hostel; power is off in the whole village; no computer, fan, fridge... is working. They say they have been calling to have it fixed, with no luck. Short power outages are almost normal on a weekly basis, for some minutes, but for hours they are unusual, the girls at the reception tell me. I wonder what the*

restaurants do with their chilled foods; do they have generators?!"[34] *(Field diary, 2015)*

Water was sometimes only supplied for about three days a week and is therefore often stored in big plastic containers on the roofs or in subterranean tanks that some hotels have built to provide water for their guests and their operations. At times the City of Santa Marta sent trucks with water (see Figure 7), but this had not always been sufficient and there have been protest and road blocks by the *Tagangueros* to protest against these conditions (Business Interviews 16, 22, 2015). One business owner explained:

> *"There is no water infrastructure in place in the mountains of the Sierra Nevada. And then in 2014 there was no second rainy season [here]. So from March until August there was no running water in the village, all the water had to be brought in by tanker lorry. This also led to a conflict between the hotels and the village, because we [the hotels] could afford to bring water in. There were road blocks on the road to Santa Marta."* (Business Interview 16, 2015)

Figure 7: A tanker lorry bringing fresh water into the village. Source: Author.

Furthermore, there was also no central sewage system, but the houses use septic tanks (Business Interview 14, 2015). There were only few paved streets in the village, mainly the route the public bus takes in the lower part of the village, near the beach front. The other

[34] One interviewed restaurant owner stated that they have not invested into a generator yet as the power outages are usually a short amount of time, so that the food would still stay cold enough not to go to waste (Business Interview 14).

streets are often not even gravel roads, but many are washed out by rain water running down from the mountains. This made some streets not driveable by car, only by motorcycle. Rubbish collection was also not unproblematic, as it is unreliable at times as well and there are few public litter bins throughout the village. These problems contributed to environmental problems in the village, and also made the village look unappealing to tourists at times.

The main tourism season was between December and February with another smaller peak from June to August for both international and domestic tourists, and the Easter holidays for domestic tourists. The main drawing points for domestic and international travellers to come to Taganga were the two village beaches, and the access to the nearby National Park Tayrona, the second most visited national park in Colombia (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia 2016). Also, the relatively inexpensive diving courses at the coral reefs off the coast of Taganga and the multi-day trekking trips to the Lost City in the nearby mountains of the Sierra Nevada were popular with international visitors. Furthermore, especially in backpacker circles, Taganga had developed a reputation as a party hotspot in the past 10 years or so, due to several nightclubs and the free availability of drugs (Keeling and Jacobs 2015; Raub, Egerton and Gómez Aragón 2012).

Culturally, Taganga was unique in Colombia as it is a traditional matriarchy, possibly based on the matriarchic organisation of the indigenous Wayúu people who were still living in the area (Grupo Etnográfico Vanderbilt University n.d.). According to locals, the men were out fishing all day while the women take care of family life, other business ventures and financial decisions (Business Interviews 15, 25, 2015). However, the interview respondents also pointed out that this tradition is slowly disappearing due to modernisation and the development of the village.

In the mountains of the Sierra Nevada near Taganga several tribes of indigenous people were living who are believed to be descendants of the ancient Tayrona people (Tairona Heritage Trust 2008). They mainly lived from agriculture and cattle raising. A few of them worked as tourist guides for treks in the Sierra Nevada; and some sold handcrafts at a popular camp site in Tayrona National Park and the beach of Tayrona that could been observed (Field Diaries 2012, 2015).

5.3 The Backpackers of Taganga

5.3.1 Introduction

This section describes the different kinds of backpackers and travel styles found amongst them in Taganga, and their implication on the consumption pattern of the different types. It then analyses the social embeddedness of the backpackers and their possible implications for the consumption and production of tourism products in the community.

5.3.2 Characteristics of the backpackers in Taganga

In Taganga, three different types of backpackers could be observed: conventional backpackers, of whom 12 were interviewed in Taganga, flashpackers, of whom five participated in this study, and artesanos, of whom three were formally interviewed. The conventional backpackers could be described as the travellers staying in budget accommodation, travelling on a loose schedule and for a prolonged period of time. The flashpackers on the other hand also followed these characteristics, but travelled for a shorter amount of time; in this study their length of travel is somewhere between 10 days and one month. They were therefore also more willing to spend a little more money on accommodation, such as staying in private rooms, especially if travelling as a couple of with a small group of friends (Backpacker Interviews 7, 21, 2015). Most interviewed solo backpackers, no matter if long-term or short-term travellers, preferred to stay in dorm accommodation as one of the respondents explained: “I am staying in a dorm room. It is cheaper for me, and that way I can also meet other travellers.” (Backpacker Interview 11, 2015) The *artesanos*, or artisan backpackers, are a little different to the conventional backpackers and flashpackers. They were described by Broocks and Hannam (2016, p. 153) as “indigenous entrepreneurial backpackers that make goods as they travel to finance their own mobility”. In this study they were found to be long term-travellers with no set timeframe for their travels, sometimes evolving into years of travelling.

It seemed that in Taganga and the Caribbean there were more Latin American backpackers travelling, as could be observed (Field Diary, 2015). Of the interviewed backpackers, there were more Latin Americans on shorter holidays (10 to 15 days) in the region (Backpacker Interviews 7, 21, 2015). The interviews as well as observations

indicate that most of them visit Cartagena and Santa Marta or Taganga and its surroundings (see also Figure 8):

> *"I then go over to the big table* [in the hostel garden] *and sit down next to two girls that I suspect Argentinian. Another one joins them. They are very occupied with their phones … Another girl joins them. We finally get into chatting. Three of them are Argentinians, one is from Chile. They are just here for 11 days, and spent a night in Taganga, then went to go to the Tayrona National Park, and now stay for another night here. They will then head to Cartagena."* (Field Diary, February 27th, 2015)

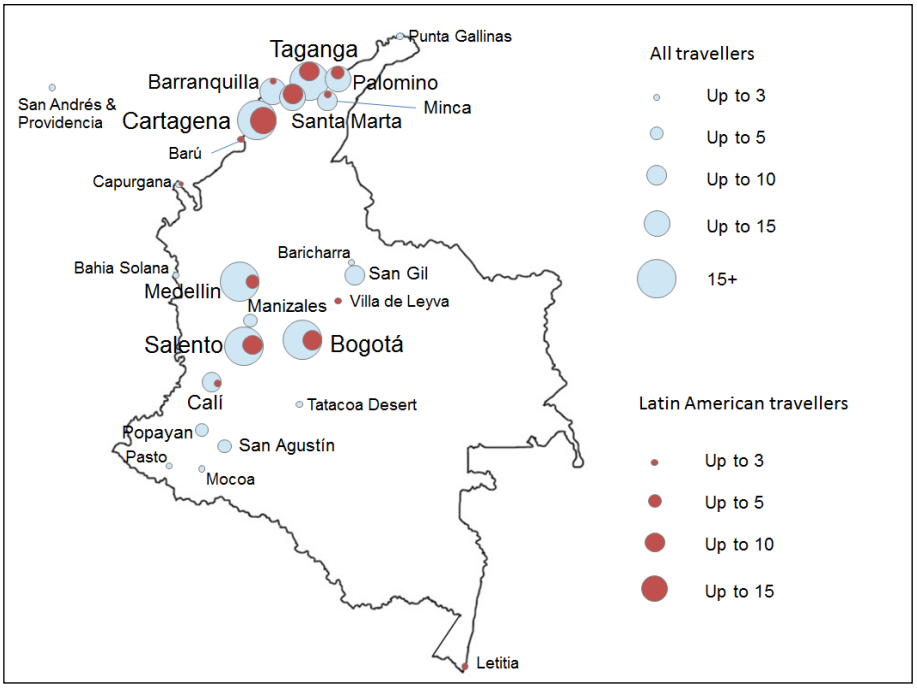

Figure 8: Map showing the travel destinations of all interviewed backpackers, comparing the destinations of Latin American backpackers to the other backpacker's destinations. Source: Author.

The Argentinians pointed out that they came to Colombia for the beaches (Backpacker Interviews 7, 21, 2015). They seem to be the main drawing point for Southern South Americans such as Argentinians and Chileans as they do not have warm beach destinations in their countries. Southern Brazil used to be a popular beach destination for them, but has become too expensive in the last years (Field Diary, 2015). One Brazilian respondent indicated though that the beaches in and around Taganga might not be that important to travellers from other parts of Latin America:

> *"I ask her if I could interview her and she agrees straight away. She is travelling for three months from Mexico through Central America to Colombia, then through the Amazon back to Brazil. [She] works for the government, but studied photography before … Here* [in Taganga] *she has been working on her photos. She is not so fussed about going to Tayrona, as she has lots of nice beaches where she lives (nearby)* [in Brazil]*, and also has been to beaches a lot in the past 2 months [in Central America]."* (Field Diary March 4th, 2015)

Coming from a country with similar scenery or having recently travelled through countries with similar scenery such as neighbouring Panama might therefore influence the activities chosen by the backpackers, and also their destination choice within Colombia.

Some European respondents said that in Taganga itself there should be more things to do, as there would be just the beach, which was not perceived as very pretty (Backpacker Interview 8, 2015). Most, however, were happy about the things to do in the area, as Taganga would make a good basis to explore the area. All of the interviewed backpackers enjoyed the beaches, either in Taganga and its nearby bays and/or in the Tayrona National Park. Further, five of the interviewed backpackers also went diving, most doing a diving course of at least 3 days, one backpacker even doing two diving courses back to back to achieve a higher diving qualification (Backpacker Interview 26, 2015). Since an Open Water Diving course, the basic qualification, costs about COP$ 720,000 at the time of fieldwork (equivalent to about £185) and also makes the backpackers stay in the village for at least 2 nights, the diving courses can be seen as an important economic contribution to the village's economy. Furthermore, five of the respondents went to the trek to the Lost City, which lasts around 5 days and cost COP$ 700,000 at the time of fieldwork (equivalent to about £180) per person. Due to these activities, that require a longer stay, the average length of stay in Taganga (including trips to the Lost City or overnight at Tayrona National Park) came to over six nights for the interviewed backpackers, with five of them even staying for around two weeks in the area (see Figure 9). The Latin American backpackers, though, had a much shorter average length of stay of just 3.4 nights, as generally their trips were shorter as well than their European and North American counterparts. These calculations, however, only included the conventional backpackers and the flashpackers, not the artesanos. They also had different preferences, as they enjoyed the beach life, but did not participate in activities like diving or trekking.

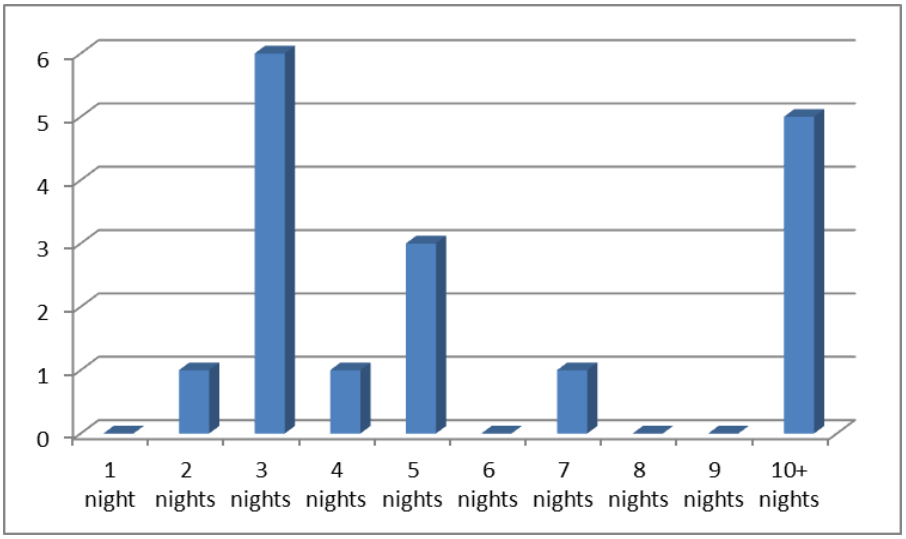

Figure 9: Length of stay of the interviewed backpackers and flashpackers in Taganga (n=17). Source: Author.

The first two groups, the interviewed conventional backpackers and flashpackers, were of mixed nationalities, from Europe and Latin America. However, the artesanos, both interviewed and observed, were predominantly from Latin American countries. These findings, along with the length of stay, suggested that the access to finance for prolonged travel might be more given in developed countries, especially considering that the majority of the interviewed travellers in the study are or were professionals in the paid work force (n=32). Furthermore, travelling for a prolonged amount of time with savings from a professional job in developed countries is much more affordable when travelling predominantly through LDCs such as Colombia. The backpackers from developed countries seemed to have more financial resources at hand than their Latin American counterparts. While the travellers from the developed countries would travel up to two years, the Latin American backpackers and flashpackers travelled for significant less time, ranging from a 10 day trip (Backpacker Interviews 7, 21, 2015) to three months (Backpacker Interview 11, 2015). This possible lack of resources to travel for a prolonged period of time and therefore a possible lack of access to travelling in general was addressed by the artesano travellers, as they worked while they travelled. One of the interviewed artesanos from Argentina explained their reasons for becoming an artesano:

> *"I have been travelling for 10 years now. I have been all over the world. I was supposed to start a Ph.D. in tourism, just like you! The Ph.D. would have been in Spain. But then my father became really ill and I went back to Argentina, and that*

was it for the Ph.D. But I was lucky and won some money. So I took the money and went to India. It was the best thing I have done in my life! It was there that I became a hippy. And I have been travelling since. I later joined the Hare Krishnas to be able to go back to India with them one day. And they provide me with food and accommodation, so… [laughs] *… This trip, if you want to call it that, I came through Peru and Ecuador, and I was working there too. I earn money by selling food, teaching yoga and selling handicrafts. I make hanging mandalas from wire. I also sell them at the Hare Krishna restaurant* [in Santa Marta]*."* (Backpacker Interview 2, 2015)

This made the artesanos unusual in that they are both consumers and producers of tourism, especially in Taganga. They seem to belong to the village, be more socially embedded into the local community, and add to the charm of the seafront of the village (see Figure 10). They seemed to be left alone by the authorities and accepted by the local community, as none of the interviewed artesanos reported any problems (Backpacker Interviews 2, 13) nor could there be any problems observed while in the field. This might be due to the long history of hippy and artesano travellers having come to Taganga since the 1970s, as will be further explained in the following section of the chapter. However, in regards to consumption, their patterns differed significantly from the conventional backpackers in Taganga. The interviewed artesanos, as well as informal conversations with others, revealed that they rather stay in private accommodation than in hostels. For example, one interviewee said:

"My family had a small plot of land here in Taganga. So after we finished university we came up here [from Bogota] and constructed a very simple house for ourselves. […] We use the house here as a base and therefore only travel through the region here, like up to Minca or to Palomino." (Backpacker Interview 13, 2015)

Although having access to a plot of their own land did not seem usual in the artesano community as they tend to travel around more, other artesanos also pointed out that they rented flats together as it would be cheaper than staying in a hostel. This also might reinforce the solidarity and sense of community between them, indicating a deep social embeddedness in the artesano community. The artesanos also did not seem to frequent backpacker restaurants, but cook for themselves as it was cheaper, for example by buying fish off the local fishermen (Field Diary, 2015). So in this case the only characteristic in regards to consumption that they seemed to share with the conventional backpackers is

the use of public transport for travelling. Not only therefore the artesanos could be seen as a different group of travellers; but culturally for them “being an artesano is a way of life”, as one Colombian artesano, who has been travelling for over 25 years, pointed out to me (Field Diary, 2015), whereas the backpacking just seemed to be a phase in the other traveller’s lives. Nevertheless, they did socialise frequently with conventional backpackers and flashpackers, so there seems to be a shared culture of travelling (Field Diary, 2015).

Figure 10: Artesanos selling their handicrafts in Taganga. Source: Author.

5.3.3 The social embeddedness of the backpackers

All of the interviewed travellers stated that they socialise with other backpackers. It is often on those occasions that not only travel tales, but also recommendations are exchanged (Field Diary, 2015). One participant commented that they trust the recommendations of other backpackers as they share the same way of living [sic], are usually looking for the same things while on the road, and in their experience the recommendations were usually good (Backpacker Interview 4, 2015). A sentiment that was shared by other backpackers, who pointed out that the socialising with international backpackers is important to them as “we share the same culture, and that kind of makes you feel at home” (Backpacker Interview 6, 2015).

While some of the travellers also used guidebooks to research destinations, hostels, restaurants and activities (Backpacker Interviews 4, 8, 20, 2015), all of the interviewed backpackers stated that they use the internet and social media for recommendations. This might indicate a power shift on the promotion of where and what is popular from the guidebooks, and their publishers and authors to the travellers themselves. The social relations between each other were now created and maintained in person while travelling and also online, and in many cases the contact continues during their trip through social media such as Facebook (Backpacker Interviews 6, 22, 2015).

Furthermore, the social relations between the travellers were often formed before the trip even begins, and with backpackers and travellers that they have never met and might never meet. This was made possible through tourism rating websites such as TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor seems to be the primary source of information for most of the interviewed backpackers and was mentioned as a planning tool by almost all of the respondents of the study, who used it to look up recommendations for accommodation, activities, restaurants and places to visit. These rating platforms seemed to become more important than the guidebooks, which only seem to be used, if at all, as a secondary information source. The platforms provided the backpackers with opinions from many other travellers, and, as mentioned above, they trust the recommendations of other travellers most. Therefore, the sourcing of information and recommendations online from other travellers seemed to give the power back to the traveller community instead of the authors and publishers of guide books.

The rating websites have further become more important to the backpackers as most of the interviewees had their accommodation pre-booked before arriving to Taganga. One of the interviewees explained: “I always pre-book my accommodation for the first night I go to a new place, especially if I arrive at night. It just makes it easier for me, as I do not have any Spanish knowledge.” Their fellow traveller mirrored the sentiment by pointing out that they used to not pre-book and just show up to look for accommodation, but now they feel more comfortable to pre-book via email (Backpacker Interview 20, 2015). So now most of the accommodation decision had already been made before arriving to a destination. This might indicate a need for greater security of the backpackers, and has important implications for the businesses as they might need social media presence and maintain their accounts on rating platforms.

Additionally, it was especially important for the Argentinian backpackers to be able to pre-book their accommodation, as this made up the most expensive part of their travels apart from the flights. With the political and economic situation of Argentina, before December 2015 Argentinian citizens were only allowed to exchange a certain amount of US dollars per month to prevent the Argentinian peso to lose more of its value, a ban that has since been lifted (Politi 2015). If the Argentinian backpackers could pay their accommodation by credit card from home they would not have to use their saved up dollars to pay for the hostel (Backpacker Interviews 7, 18, 2015), and therefore mostly preferred to pre-book their accommodation for their entire trip.

In regards to the social embeddedness, expressed through the relations between the backpackers and the locals in Taganga, there seemed to be not too much socialising between the conventional backpackers and flashpackers, and the local community. This could be explained through the atmosphere of the village, of how welcome the travellers felt. One of the respondents stated:

> *"Taganga is not as welcoming as other places in Colombia. Maybe it is because it is a bit spoilt by tourism. It is less secure, and there is more police on the street. But the people seem less friendly and smiley here, but generally the people in Colombia are very friendly anyway."* (Backpacker Interview 8, 2015)

This sentiment was supported by other interviewed travellers as well, as one Irish backpacker expressed that the people in Taganga seem to be annoyed by tourism and have lost their curiosity about tourists, and are less friendly than in other places (Backpacker Interview 20, 2015). This feeling of not being welcome might have therefore led to little interaction and cultural exchange between the locals and the backpackers. Of the interviewed backpackers in Taganga (excluding the artesanos who socialise with the locals much more as they seem to be more part of the local community), only one of the travellers stated that they socialised with locals on the streets and on the beach that was more than business interactions (Backpacker Interview 4, 2015). All other backpackers only talked to locals for business purposes, for example when they had their laundry washed (Backpacker Interview 6, 2015). An English female traveller shared her observation in regards to a difference to gender though:

"I think you are more welcome as a girl alone. All the men say hello. […] When we go out as a couple, we don't get approached that much, but if we do, then these end up being more genuine conversations, as it is not about getting hit on." (Backpacker Interview 8, 2015)

This thought can be supported by the observations of the researcher, who was travelling as a solo female as well. A lot of the initiation of contact between male locals was about 'getting hit on', which they seem to perceive as part of their culture. However, it therefore did not really make for good conversation or much meaningful cultural exchange, but rather placed a feeling of unease on the researcher. This only changed when the researcher befriended a local young couple and was introduced to their male friends by them. Then the conversations turned more meaningful and there seemed to be more curiosity to learn about each other's culture (Field Diary, 2015). Since most of the backpackers do not stay long enough to befriend locals, this might mean that most interactions with locals might stay shallow, or solo females might even try to avoid contact. An excerpt of the field diary (Feb. 21st, 2015) further illustrates how solo female travellers can feel uneasy when interacting with local men, especially at night:

"I have a look for the girls [I came with to the bar], but I cannot find them. Not sure if they left together or with their respective love interests. … I walk over to the taxi stand, it's empty. … I walk up to the street in the hope of catching one on the main street, when one turns into the road. I wave it down, and we go up the hill [towards the hostel]. He [the driver] asks me where I am from, I say Germany, he says he likes German girls. Awkward. I don't feel comfortable and can see him checking out my legs (I am wearing my hiking shorts). So glad the ride is just 2 minutes long. He asks me if I am alone, but I tell him my two friends are waiting for me already. What a sleeze bag! He then wants COP$10,000 for the ride. I laugh straight to his face, telling him I will not pay that, that I know it is only COP$5,000. He says it's $5,000 during the day, but $10,000 at night. I tell him that I can go to the Jumbo supermarket in Santa Marta by cab for $10,000 (playing the "You cannot fool me, I know my way around here" card), telling him again I won't pay $10,000. He then says he won't discuss with me, I should just give him $7,000. While I count out the money he tells me it is necessary to take a cab at night though [because of the

robberies]. I tell him it wouldn't really matter who robs me, the robbers or the cab drivers … He seems flabbergasted at that response, now trying to scare me more, telling me they might rape me though. I cannot believe this guy! I tell him I know karate (which I don't, only one term of jiu jitsu). He literally backs off. I give him the money and leave, going inside the hostel. […] I wonder if the cabbies do this on purpose, and if it is their sons/nephews/… doing the robberies so they get more business. … I decide to not go out in Taganga anymore, feels unsafe. How I miss Salento!"

As these stories and experiences are also shared within the backpacker community, it could be one reason why there the backpackers do not seek much interaction with the locals either. Rather, they socialised more with fellow travellers in Taganga. The analysis of the interviews showed that it did not make a big difference if the travellers were from Latin America and/or Spanish-speakers, they mostly stayed within their backpacker world and in Taganga did not make much effort to socialise with locals as they did not feel particularly welcome and some also unsafe, especially at night (Backpacker Interview 21, 2015; see also field diary excerpt above). This lack of interaction and cultural exchange might have led to feelings of resentment on both sides, the backpackers and the locals of Taganga. If this feeling could be resolved remains questionable. Therefore most of the interaction between hosts and guests remained limited to business transactions, which seem to be relatively unaffected by the lack of feeling welcome in the village, as the interviewed backpackers were mostly happy about the tourism products that were offered as mentioned above.

5.3.4 Summary

The findings presented in this section suggest that the different types of backpackers have different travel patterns and might therefore consume tourism differently. This might have indications for the tourism businesses and the products they offer. Furthermore, it was revealed that the use of social media and online rating platforms have given more power to the travellers in deciding on the popularity of a destination or a product, which also might have implications on the businesses catering to the online and offline socially connected backpackers. As for the social embeddedness, the interactions between hosts and guests were very limited, leading to the backpackers rather socialising with one another, but this

did not seem to affect the business decisions of the backpackers too much. How the businesses, in turn, respond to the backpackers is explored in the next section.

5.4 Business Development of Taganga

5.4.1 Introduction

This section of the chapter first looks at the historical tourism development in the community, and at the evidence of how tourism has grown over the years. It then analyses how tourism has developed, and who or what drove and drives the tourism development in the village, which indicates power relations within the community.

5.4.2 The Drivers of Tourism Development in Taganga

Tourism had developed slowly in the past 40 years in Taganga. This could be due to the armed conflict starting in the 1960s in Colombia, which was also carried out in the nearby mountains of the Sierra Nevada between guerrilla and paramilitary troops until the mid-2000s (Martínez Echeverría 2007). In the 1970s and 1980s about five to ten beachfront restaurants developed, run by local women, selling mainly seafood dishes using the fish caught by the local fishermen (Business Interview 25, 2015). This attracted mainly day trippers from nearby Santa Marta, where there was already some tourism development of domestic 'sea and sun' tourism.

Then, Taganga was also a popular place for national and international hippy travellers in the 1970s and 1980s, possibly due to the easy access to marijuana from the nearby Sierra Nevada (Figueroa Cabras, 2011). One native respondent recalls the lasting impression the young travellers left on her:

> *"I am 54 now. When I was about 22, a lot of hippies came. And they stayed in the little tents on the beach here. The security situation was different, there was no problem sleeping on the beach. It was very secure here. There were also foreigners coming here. Let me tell you, I have a daughter that is 35 years old, and she has the name of a foreign girl. She is called [says the name of her daughter]. It is a*

> *foreign name. I met that girl, she was from Italy, and I liked her name, so I gave it to my daughter when I had her."* (Business Interview 25, 2015)

In the late 1970s the first hotel, *La Ballena Azul*, opened in Taganga (Business Interview 16, 2015; Figueroa Cabas, 2011). It was initiated by a Colombian businessman and his French associate, and now has a national three star rating. One or two more hotels in the budget category, such as *Playa Brava*, opened in the 1980s. Then in 1990, a local couple set up the first dive centre in the village, since the husband was an industrial diver and saw the opportunity to use his expertise in tourism (Business Interview 23, 2015). With the opening of the hotels and the development of more tourism products, domestic tourism started to become more popular in Taganga, with tourists now being able to stay overnight.

In the 1990s the development of backpacker tourism was initiated also by outsiders of the village. In 1996 a Frenchman and his wife from Santa Marta opened the first hostel in Taganga, up on the hill in the then outskirts of Taganga. The owner recalled the first years of running their hostel:

> *"We opened in 1997. […] We just rented out a room in our house. We started with one room, and then constructed a second one, then a third one. It was a slow development, because there was not a lot of tourism back then due to the security situation. I still worked as a teacher in Santa Marta back then. After 6 years we had 7 rooms. I never imagined that the house would grow so much! In 2002 we dedicated ourselves fully to tourism, and I quit my job, even though there was still insecurity due to the guerrillas. Today we have 13 employees, 31 rooms and can host up to 104 guests, but at around 80 the house already feels full."* (Business Interview 16, 2015)

One year later another French couple opened another hostel, also up the hill in a residential area, and in the same year a third hotel opened at the beach front. This shows that the development of the accommodation sector was mainly driven by outsiders of the village and by French nationals, who initiated backpacker tourism in Taganga. They held the knowledge power as the local village population lacked travel experience, since they lived a rather simple life centred around fishing and selling their catch to the traditional seafood restaurants run by the women of the village. Although some of the village's women had received a good education in schools and universities in neighbouring Santa Marta, their life was rooted in the village (Business Interview 25, 2015). They were

therefore not familiar with different forms of tourism and lacked the experience of tourism as tourists themselves, and also the access to information such as what (international) tourists expect from accommodation and which services to offer. The foreigners however had this travel experience (Business Interviews 14, 16, 22, 2015) and were therefore able to develop products specifically geared at backpacker tourists, even though this was still on a small scale with regard to available beds, for example. This was due to Colombia still being considered too dangerous to travel to due to guerrilla and paramilitary activities (Caputo, Newton and McColl 2008; Lennard 2003; Mulholland 2007; Sheers 2006).

In the late 1990s a few more tourism businesses opened, but it was a limited development, especially of international tourism, due to the security situation in the country. Since the early 2000s and the initiation of “Plan Colombia” with extensive funding from the US in the war against drugs, a harder political line against guerrilla organisations and their demobilisation, the security situation improved significantly, both nationally and also in the area of Santa Marta. In the mid-2000s the national government initiated “tourism caravans”, where the Colombian police and military would secure highways leading to major national tourist destinations (Spirou 2011), which also benefitted especially the domestic tourism in Santa Marta and Taganga. These tourist caravans allowed the government of Colombia to restore some public order and can be seen as an expression of the government to regain control and power over territories that were controlled by guerrilla or paramilitary troops (Braun 2012).

Thanks to these measures and the improving security situation, since the mid-2000s gradually more and more tourism businesses opened in Taganga, especially catering to international backpackers who tend to “open up” new destinations (Cohen, 2008), as which Colombia presented itself now. By being included in the popular backpacker guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet* since the mid-2000s, Taganga’s popularity among backpackers grew. Specialist restaurants and cafes opened geared at backpackers, more hostels, and also more diving centres addressed the increased demand. Figueroa Cabas (2011) counted for her study 41 budget accommodation providers, of whom six were explicit backpacker hostels in 2009, with the capacity of four to over 20 beds. In conjunction with the 35 other budget accommodation establishments they could accommodate a total of 191 guests. These hostel beds made up 50% of all of Taganga’s capacity at that time, with the three hotels providing 35% of beds, and rural bed and breakfast units providing a further 15% of beds (Figueroa Cabas, 2011).

Local, national and international tourism entrepreneurs drove this development. Generally, mostly foreigners or outsiders from other parts of Colombia would open a business such as a hostel or a restaurant serving more international fare, and then villagers would try and copy the business idea by opening their own business with varying success (Field Diary, 2015; see also Figure 11). Again, this can be seen as an expression of lack of experience as tourists themselves and the power of tourism knowledge lying outside of the local's experiences. This lacking experience leads to locals usually not being able to develop their own, innovative tourism products addressing other segments than the already existing ones in the tourism market in Taganga. One Colombian from another region travelled as a backpacker like the hippy travellers themselves and was therefore able to address niches in the tourism market such as providing camping and hammock facilities for low budget travellers (Business Interview 20, 2015).

Figure 11: Locally run restaurant serving French entrecote; closed down during fieldwork. Source: Author.

Another business owner without travel experience was inspired by international backpackers they met who gave them ideas for their business. One successful backpacker restaurant owner in Taganga recalls how they got into backpacker tourism as their livelihood:

"In 2005, when we came, tourism was just starting out here. And opportunity and necessity brought us to this village. In Bogotá we were unemployed... so, well, we needed to leave the city. […] We came to Taganga because there was a foreign lady here. It was a woman from Belgium. And she saw my economic situation in Bogotá and she said to me 'Come on, let's go to Taganga! You cook very well and there is no place to eat good food over there. So let's go to Taganga!' In the village there were not many places to eat, during that time, right. So, like 10 years ago. Now there are a lot of place to eat. […] We started out with one table [for the customers], and a shelf where we prepared the sandwiches. And then the 3 or 4 hotels that were in Taganga started to send their guests over for food. […] Actually, the idea about selling sandwiches came from the Belgian woman. She told me 'Come on, let's sell sandwiches. In my country they sell them at every corner.' So it was basically her idea. […] After that, the business grew; we re-invested the money we made into the business. […] It has changed our lives. We had the opportunity to have our own business and to start this business, and to start our lives [again] at around 40 years old. […] We had absolutely nothing, we had lost everything. […] For me, Santa Marta gave me opportunities ..." (Business Interview 17, 2015)

It appeared therefore, that the tourism development in Taganga was self-initiated. The hospitality sector was initiated early on by locals making use of the products they harvested from agriculture. On the other hand, the accommodation sector was mainly driven by outsiders, either foreigners or from other parts of Colombia, with travel experience, for both the backpacker tourism accommodation as well as the hotel development. They seemed to have held the power over the accommodation sector during the initiation of tourism in Taganga. Locals have only been involved in providing accommodation by copying the businesses initiated by outsiders. For the activities offered to tourists, the diving sector, which is one of the most important assets of the village, was initiated locally[35], a rare occurrence in LDCs as the initial costs of investment are relatively high (Daldeniz and Hampton 2013). The provision of diving courses was then picked up by outsiders once tourism started to develop more in the village. Other activities on offer such as tours and transport were set up by both locals and outsiders. However, it could be argued that especially the backpacker tourism sector in the community was set up and

[35] The owners of the first dive shop in Taganga were former industrial divers (Business Interview 23, 2015). This provided them not only with expertise, but it can be assumed that they therefore possessed diving equipment and a stronger financial background than other locals such as the fishermen.

driven by outsiders rather than villagers, which potentially led to tension further explored in section 5 of this chapter.

5.4.3 Current Tourism Development in Taganga

Since 2010 an accelerated business development could be observed for Taganga (see Figure 13). Many more hostels, restaurants and activity providers opened new businesses after 2010. For example, in previous research in 2012 it was observed that there were nine dive centres in the village (Thieme, 2012). In 2015, however, this number had risen to 15 (Field Diary, 2015), an increase of 60% in just three years. The business development in the last years had been driven by locals, nationals and foreigners, with many successful businesses being copied by locals, nationals and foreigners. An example was the restaurant sector serving international cuisine. In 2009, a French-international restaurant opened in one of the successful backpacker hostels, offering entrecôte as their signature dish (Business Interviews 16, 22, 2015). In 2015, about six restaurants in the village run by locals and foreigners all offering it as their signature dish were counted (Field Diary, 2015).

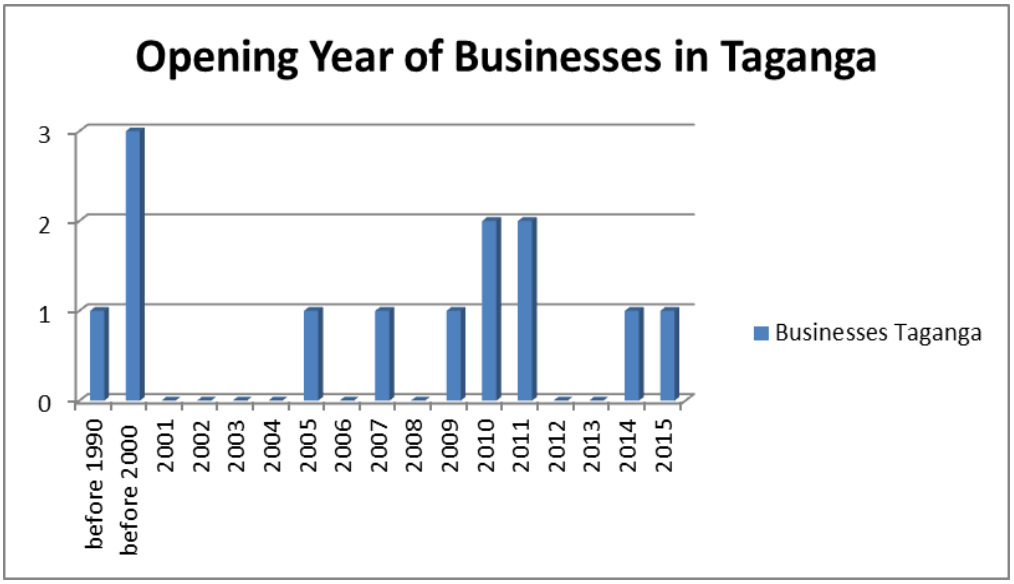

Figure 12: Opening year of the interviewed backpacker tourism businesses (n=13) in Taganga, indicating accelerated development since the late 2000s.Source: Author.

The accelerated development has therefore led to increased competition in all sectors like accommodation, hospitality and related activities. The locals still ran the traditional

restaurants at the seafront of the village that cater to both domestic tourists and international independent travellers; and some locals run a hostel (Business Interviews 15, 25, 2015). However, the majority of the backpacker tourism sector of the village seemed to be run by Colombians from other parts of the country and by foreigners as the data collected suggests. Of the 13 interviewed businesses in the village, four were run by locals (one with joint international ownership), two by Colombians from outside the village, only two were solely run by foreigners, and the rest were joint ownership of foreign and Colombians from outside the village.

Even though foreign run businesses seemed to comprise only a relatively small number of the tourism businesses in the village, some locals perceived that their village is run and "overrun" by foreigners (Business Interview 25, 2015), indicating a low social embeddedness of the foreign business owners with the traditional *tagangeuros*. This misconception could stem from the fact that a lot of the foreign run businesses were rather successful, possibly due to the travel experience of their owners as noted earlier, and were therefore more visible in the community landscape. It could also be related to some jealousy from locals who may have tried and maybe failed at their tourism business venture, or were excluded from the profits of tourism in their village due to lack of human capital such as experience, education or financial capital to open a tourism business. That said, some local socio-economically deprived households earned a little income by providing laundry service to backpackers (see Figure 13) and therefore could also gain from tourism (Field Diary, 2015).

Figure 13: Residential house offering laundry service and possibly informal rooms for rent.
Source: Author

Despite the number of tourism businesses steadily growing since 2005, the government or local authorities did not regulate this development. Particularly the tourism sectors like accommodation, restaurants and activities like scuba diving developed largely unregulated. This has led to an excess supply in the village, especially of accommodation. In 2015, there were 75 accommodation businesses in Taganga registered with the Chamber of Commerce of Santa Marta (2016), of which 47 were classified as hostels and shall therefore be included in the analysis of numbers of backpacker tourism businesses. The 47 hostels had 1,083 beds registered with the Chamber of Commerce (2016), which could be seen as a large number of beds for a small village like Taganga. This becomes apparent if the number of hostel beds in 2009 is compared to the number of hostel beds in 2015. As mentioned earlier, in 2009 there were 41 budget accommodation providers providing 191 beds (Figueroa Cabas, 2011). In comparison to 2015 that is an increase in (official) hostel beds of 467% in just six years.

Adding to this, the number of beds is expected to be even much higher, as some hostels had, for example, registered with the Chamber of Commerce (2016) four rooms and three beds in total, which seems unrealistic as this would mean there would not even be one bed per room. Furthermore, there are a number of unregistered, illegally run hostels and

bedrooms illegally rented out in the village. One registered business owner estimated the total number of accommodation providers in the village to be around 100 (Business Interview 16, 2015). The list of registered hostels with the Chamber of Commerce, compared with the hostels on offer on booking websites such as Booking.com and hostelworld.com, along with the observation and site mapping of the researcher in the village during field work (Field Diary, 2015), would suggest the number could be around 70 hostels[36]. Although no occupancy rate for the village could be established, the responses from all hostel owners suggested that the village's accommodation is never booked out, and even some of the interviewed hostels are struggling to survive (Business Interview 15, 2015). This oversupply of beds led to hyper-competition in the village. The excess supply is further fuelled by informal and illegally run businesses in both accommodation and restaurants (also see Figure 13). This has created some friction in the village, which will be further explored in section 5.

Lastly, it could be observed that tourism has replaced traditional income generation of the village to a large extent. Even though the village still liked to see itself as a traditional fishing village (Business Interview 25, 2015), other respondents pointed out that it is not the case anymore (Business Interviews 14, 16, 2015), indicating a declining cultural embeddedness of the businesses and possibly inhabitants of the village. It was also observed that many of the fishermen now offer transport for tourists to nearby beaches or to Tayrona National Park with their boats; others work as captains of the diving boats. This means that the village and its inhabitants are very much dependent on tourism as a livelihood, and have few other means to generate income if tourism declines.

[36] Figueroa Cabas (2011) points out that in 2009 of the in total 58 accommodation providers counted for their study, only 13 (=22.4%) were registered in the national tourism register with the Chamber of Commerce. Basing a calculation upon those numbers, this means there could be up to an additional 77% of unregistered accommodation providers in the community. Even a conservative estimate of an additional 30% of unregistered hostel beds would mean that there would be an additional 325 beds, increasing the number to total of 1,408 possible hostel beds in Taganga. Unfortunately, no numbers of overnight visitors per day in Taganga or occupancy rates for the accommodation providers could be established as a comparison to the number of beds provided.

5.5 Power Relations in Taganga

5.5.1 Introduction

This section of the chapter examines the tensions and conflicts that the village was dealing with, which arose due to tourism development, and how they were addressed. This gives an insight into the dynamics and some power relations within the community, and also highlights the social and cultural embeddedness of the tourism businesses in the village. First, the relationship between the businesses is assessed. Then, there is tension between formal and informal businesses, which also needs to be seen in the context of the hyper competition mentioned earlier. Thirdly, some of the tensions between tourism, its businesses and the village are scrutinised. After that, the problematic conflict between tourism and so called shadow industries, such as crime, are examined. Lastly, it is discussed how the government and local political actors address these issues.

5.5.2 The tensions between formal and informal businesses

Many of the tourism businesses in the village seemed to work together on the basis of personal social relations and/or commissions, only one new hostel did not see the necessity to work with other tourism businesses as they were planning to run the hostel only for a limited amount of time and the backpackers would organise their activities themselves without needing the help of the hostel owners (Business Interview 21, 2015). Some other business owners stated that they only refer to businesses that they trust and frequent themselves, without receiving commission (Business Interviews 14, 15, 17, 22, 2015). Especially when it came to recommendations for restaurants, the business owners seem to base them on friendship and kinship, which might reflect the social embeddedness of the businesses in cliques. One local hostel owner referred their guests to their sibling's restaurant as they know that they are honest people and will give their guests good food (Business Interview 15, 2015). Another hostel owner sends their guests to restaurants of friends (Business Interview 20, 2015). Some restaurant owners even send their clients to other restaurants if they are run by friends or if they really like the food of the other restaurant (Business Interviews 17, 22, 2015).

Most of the business owners pointed out that it is important to them that the quality of the businesses they recommend to their clients is 'right'. Two activity providers especially commented on the fact that they would consider a recommendation mostly based on what would be the best business for the client, like the right kind of accommodation, and less on their personal connections (Business Interviews 19, 23, 2015). That said, when it came to recommendations of tours like the Lost City trek or diving, some of the interviewed businesses receive commission from the tour and diving operators as the price value of these activities would be high (Business Interviews 16, 20, 24, 2015). One hostel has found a rather unique way of using the commission they earn:

> *"We have had the information desk for 2 years now. […] It was necessary as the girls at the reception always had to answer the questions of the guests, but they don't have time for that, they need to deal with the reservations, check-in and their other jobs. For many years we did not receive commissions, but since we run the information desk we do charge commission on the tours and diving we sell through the desk. The commissions we earn through the sales are then shared between all the employees."* (Business Interview 16, 2015)

However, there were also critical voices from some business owners about working on commission. A foreign activity provider was critical about the use of commission between the businesses in Taganga that they would only work together on a commission basis, but not work together for the general good; risking that everybody would just work for themselves (Business Interview 19, 2015). A local restaurant owner expressed their frustration with the commissionaires who do not run activities themselves, but approach tourists on the streets and in the restaurants trying to sell them tours and activities they then receive commissions for. The business owner described them as "the real thieves operating in the village" (Business interview 25, 2015).

Illegally operated businesses led to tension in the village and among the tourism businesses as some of the interviewed business owners pointed out (Business Interviews 15, 16, 22, 24, 2015). This could also be observed by the researcher as some of the houses owned by locals renting out rooms seem to do so on an informal basis (see Figure 1 in section 3.3). This has led to frustration among the legal tourism entrepreneurs. One hostel owner pointed out the problems arising from illegal businesses as competition to the legal ones: "The illegal [hostels] do not pay minimum wage; they also do not pay for insurance, their taxes... etc. That means they can sell their rooms for much cheaper than

we do.” (Business Interview 16, 2015) Another one bemoaned the lack of involvement from the official side though, stating that if you do not want to comply with the rules and regulations, one can bypass them. This would then create unfair competition for the ones who do comply with those regulations (Business Interview 24, 2015). Other interviewees (Business Interviews 15, 16, 2015) also complained about lack of intervention from the officials from the Chamber of Commerce or Tourism Police. They would only check up on the registered, legal businesses, if they complied with regulations, but would not check the illegal hostels for their registration. A European restaurant owner pointed out that the hygiene inspections were rather negligent and they had heard from other restaurant owners that they could bribe the officials to get their hygiene certificate (Business Interview 22, 2015).

The evidence showed that even though laws and regulations for the tourism businesses officially exist, they were not always enforced by the local government. This created resentment and frustration among the entrepreneurs who run registered businesses as it puts more financial pressure on those businesses to compete with the unregistered ones. This creates more tension within the village between the registered and unregistered businesses and might weaken their social relations.

Since the local government and its organs such as the tourism police, which is part of the national police force, did not enforce their own rules, therefore creating somewhat of a power vacuum, some business owners had taken their own measures to ensure less of a tourism black market. One interviewee recalled starting their tour operator business:

> *“I started promoting my business by going to the big hostels and offering my services there. But [name of owner of one of the biggest and most successful hostels in the village] refused to let me promote my services in their hostel as long as the business was illegal. They told me 'When you are legal, you can come to me.' Then also other businesses in my industry informed on me to the police. So I registered with the National Tourism Register and became legal.”* (Business Interview 18, 2015)

The lack of involvement from the official side had therefore led to initiatives by the entrepreneurs themselves. As the quote shows, the larger tourism businesses could possibly exert a certain amount of power over the smaller, illegal tourism businesses that wish to cooperate with them. Also, direct competitors that were legal businesses could put

some pressure on illegal businesses by reporting them to the local authorities. It seemed though, that the local authorities did not always act upon the report, since they are not thorough with their work as noted above. This led to only self-regulation of the businesses within each other, which could then, in turn, lead to more tensions between the village's community and the existing tourism businesses.

This tension could be fuelled because, from observation, the illegal businesses seemed mostly be run by local villagers, whereas the legal businesses are mainly run by outsiders of the village as shown earlier. The locals might have felt excluded from entering into the competitive tourism market of the village, lacking funds and possibly education that the outsiders have in order to make their businesses legal and competitive. These tensions are some of the underlying conflicts that will be explored in the following section, focussing on the tension tourism development created in the village.

5.5.3 Tourism and the village

When looking at the tensions between the community in the village and tourism, various factors seem to contribute to them. Firstly, there was the lack of access to education in Taganga as noted earlier. The village had a primary and secondary school, however, the schools lacks some basic teaching equipment such as simple science laboratories (IED Taganga otra institución que espera apoyo de las Administración Distrital 2012). Therefore the students have to go to other schools in Santa Marta for their science education. The better schools are in Santa Marta, and some of the business owners send their children there (Business Interview 16; Field Diary, 2015). Even though there was a school in Taganga, some business owners have bemoaned the locals' lack of education, making it hard to employ them (Business Interview 16, 2015). However, the locals of the village had criticised the businesses for not employing enough people from the village, instead preferring employees from Santa Marta:

> *"We were not very lucky with the employees we had from Taganga. […] This has been a criticism from the community, that the tourism businesses of Taganga do not employ enough people from Taganga, including us. And they criticise us a lot for that. […] Why do we not employ them? Well, in reality, they are not prepared. For*

reasons of education and ... They are just not very much prepared to work." (Business Interview 16, 2015)

Again, the government had failed to some extent to provide adequate education for the locals to be able to compete in the labour market with the better educated people coming from Santa Marta. This failure was only partially addressed by a small satellite campus of the University of Magdalena, which is based in Santa Marta that houses the Centre of the Development of Fishing in Taganga (Herrera Delghams 2011). The outpost seemed primarily concerned with researching the settlement of molluscs as an alternative to fishing in Taganga (Universia Colombia 2009), and the utilisation of less popular edible fish in food products and the hospitality sector in Taganga (Herrera Delghams 2011). It did not seem to provide any vocational or other training in regards to business or tourism specifically; therefore it might not help to bridge the knowledge gap of tourism, business or language skills.

This failure of the government was then again addressed by some of the businesses. A foreign hospitality business owner, for example, tried to teach their employees English, so they could converse better with their clients; however, the offer was not taken up very much by the local employees (Field Diary, 2015). The entrepreneur also saw this, among other measures they have put in place to support their employees, as a possibility to give something back to the community (Business Interview 14, 2015). Similarly, a local dive centre predominantly employed people from the village that they train to become dive guides (Business Interview 23, 2015). So to raise the education level and make its citizens fit for tourism employment in the village, the government appeared to rely on private measures from businesses.

Nevertheless, this educational divide meant that some people had received a better education than others in the village, and this has also led to tension. One local interviewee pointed this out:

"There are people who have gone to school only for a short amount of time. Due to that, they are more ignorant; they do not have a vision. Those, however, who studied, have another vision. And both of those two groups work in tourism, but it is impossible to unite them." (Business Interview 15, 2015)

Adding to the lack of education were also differences in the work culture that were a recurring theme mentioned by business owners from both outside and inside of the village,

as implied in the quote as well. The lack of vision of some locals had been argued by a few respondents, which they saw as cultural differences, such as the “relaxed” work attitude of the villagers (Business Interviews 15, 19, 2015). This would also be fuelled by a lack of long-term planning. Instead, the locals were seen to prefer to earn money quickly and in that moment without working hard for it (Business Interviews 15, 16, 19, 2015). One foreign businesses owner expressed his thoughts on cultural attitudes:

> *“There is a certain conflict between the locals and foreigners. I mean, the foreigners come here with money, but they do something with it. And they employ people from here [the village] and bring in tourism. But the locals are jealous of them, of us. But we work for it! And they don’t. They just want to get rich fast. That is why you have all those problems here with stealing and selling drugs. […] There is money envy, but we have different levels of education. So even the locals who get rich fast don’t know how to manage their money. They spend it on partying, sex and drinking, like it is described in the reggaeton music they listen to.”* (Business Interview 19, 2015)

Furthermore, the locals seemed to want retain their culture in which they are embedded and that had been challenged by the development of the village brought by tourism. This added to the lack of a long-term vision for the village, which was necessary to move the village forward and address some of the infrastructural and social issues. One of the foreign business owners pointed out the problem with trying to hold on to their traditions and not adapting:

> *“The village needs to develop; it is not a fishing village anymore. The locals need to understand that they need to take care of it. I have talked to some people in the village about it. The ones who have a bit of understanding know that [development is necessary], but the hard core fishermen don't.”* (Business Interview 14, 2015)

Where some of the locals saw some issues being more of the responsibility of government, outsiders also stressed the responsibilities the villagers have to take on. This letting go of their former traditional lifestyle might have also led to other implications. An outsider, who had lived and set up their business in the village a long time ago, observed that Taganga was a fishing village before with a simple lifestyle revolving around catching fish and selling it (Business Interview 16, 2015). But now with less fish in the sea according to local fishermen (Field Diary, 2012) and with tourism development there would

be a feeling and mind set of poverty in the local people, seeing the lifestyle that outsiders and foreign tourists can afford (Business Interview 16, 2015).

This feeling of poverty, along with the mind set of wanting to make money quickly, has led to some locals selling their houses or land to tourism businesses, creating a sense of displacement of locals by outsiders and has also led to increased house prices (Thieme, 2012). Furthermore, it appears to have also led to increased robberies of tourists in the village, which will be further discussed in the following section.

5.5.4 Tourism industry and the shadow industries

Three obvious shadow industries had developed in Taganga over the course of its tourism development influencing the tourism businesses in the village: prostitution, the drug trade and the armed robberies of tourists. Prostitution was not that obvious and could not be observed during field work. One interviewee argued that what was often called "prostitution" by some villagers was not the classic type of prostitution, but more of local girls looking for a foreign boyfriend to get then pregnant so they would get financial support from them (Business Interview 16, 2015). Other interviewees thought that the girls were not locals but outsiders from other parts of Colombia (Business Interview 15, 2015).

A more obvious issue was the drug trade in the village. Hard and soft drugs such as marijuana and amphetamines were freely sold to tourists and were easily available on the street (Field Diary, 2015). All of the interviewed businesses condemned the use of drugs by tourists. However, even on some hostel premises the consumption of hard drugs such as cocaine by a few backpackers was observed:

> *"We [a group of travellers of various nationalities] sit at a big table in the hostel garden. […] The Irish guy casually pops himself a little package up his nose while we chat. I am flabbergasted. Also, it is my 3rd time here [in Taganga], and I have been living in London, but I have actually never seen coke. He bought the powder pressed in small packages so he can pop a package up his nostril, no snorting necessary. He offers me some, I decline."* (Field Diary, 2015)

Another restaurant owner said that some of the other restaurants even allowed the sale and consumption of drugs on their premises (Business Interview 25, 2015). However,

generally the community and business owners did not seem to like the drug trade. An increased police presence and random strip searching of tourists was supposed to tackle the problem, as was the investigation against Israeli business owners running tourism businesses in Taganga who were suspected of drug trafficking and prostitution (Unidad Investigativa El Tiempo 2012). However, from observation, drugs were more easily available in 2015 than they were in 2012. It could not be established if the drug sellers were from the village or from the outside. Nevertheless, the issues of drug trafficking was not really addressed by authorities, again not exerting their political power.

Another problem Taganga had been facing is that of armed robberies. Robberies of tourists had been happening in the village for some years[37], especially in the parts of the settlement that are further up the hill and around the football pitch. The government intervened with a heightened police presence going on patrol in the village during main season. One entrepreneur running their business at the beach front, where no robberies happen, thought this was enough and the problem had been addressed (Business Interview 14, 2015). Another hostel owner argued that tourists cannot expect the same security standard as at home and have to live with these robberies (Business Interview 24, 2015). However, the majority of the respondents were not happy with the security situation in the village. Especially tourism businesses in the higher elevated part of town, where a lot of hostels are situated, complained about this as their guests could not walk home safely from the beach, restaurants and bars after dark. For some businesses this led to a decline in occupancy (Business Interview 15, 2015). They argued that the extended police presence did not address the issue, but just calmed it for a while with this measure.

Some of the interviewees accused the police of not doing anything about the robberies, which often occurred at gun or knife point. They would seem to know who the culprits are since it is a small village where everybody knows everybody. However, they would not intervene (Business Interviews 15, 16, 22, 2015). One hostel owner recalled a situation:

> *"We had guests that they have robbed close to our house. We called the police and they came, but they did not do anything. They didn't even take the names of our guests down!"* (Business Interview 15, 2015)

[37] Even though Botero and Zielinski's study from 2010 described Taganga as a safe destination, despite occasional robberies, looking at blog posts and guide books in the past 5 years reveals that many travellers think differently about this and, thanks to social media, report the muggings and robberies to other travellers (Amarula Sail, 2015; Mercer, 2013; TripAdvisor, n.d.).

The local government seemed to have failed to address the issues and did not seem to comply with the tasks that they were supposed to do, protecting the businesses and their customers. It seemed to left to the businesses and the community to deal with those issues themselves. Some businesses, including one of the biggest hostels in the community, addressed this vacuum, and cooperated and started a private security initiative by employing a night watchman to safeguard the street their businesses are located on. As for the community and their coping with the armed robberies, a few respondents hinted that the villagers knew which individuals or families are carrying out the robberies (Business Interviews 15, 16, 22, 2015). One respondent suggested that the taxi drivers and boat transport operators were involved in the robberies as they would have more business now because tourists feel unsafe walking after dark or to nearby beaches (Business Interview 16, 2015). However, nothing seemed to be done about those robberies by the community itself. One interviewee explained:

> *"It is the young ones who rob. […] They need a strict hand, they are minors after all. But they know that the police don't do anything against them, so they continue. […] Their families are accomplices, encouraging them. […] We wanted to talk to those families, but we fear repercussions. Who knows what they will do, kidnap us or burn down our house. […] The authorities are not respected here, because they don't do anything. […] So because of this one feels helpless and powerless. We cannot defend ourselves. But it also cannot go on like this."* (Business Interview 15, 2015)

This sentiment of powerlessness was also expressed by another respondent who felt that the community was disinterested in changing the security situation, because they feel they cannot change anything (Business Interview 23, 2015). The little intervention by the state in resolving the security issue and failure to protect the businesses appears to have led to a power vacuum in the village. It was partially filled by the criminals knowing there were no apparent repercussions for them.

Another group who might have filled this power vacuum are paramilitary troops. Only one respondent would talk to me about them, so this can only be seen as rather anecdotal evidence. However, from what the interviewee had to say it is understandable that others would not openly talk about the paramilitary activity and their involvement in tourism:

> *"In the beginning of the 2000s I had problems with the paramilitaries. In the village, they have already murdered 5 people who had tourism businesses, a tour company*

and hostels. Other tourism business owners are in hiding and run their business from somewhere else in the country. The paramilitaries want protection money. I didn't want to pay. I told them I don't have the money and I would rather close my business down. […] I am ok at the moment, but sometimes I am scared. I am thinking about selling my business and moving somewhere else." (Business Interview 18, 2015)

Further research about kidnappings and killings of tourism entrepreneurs in the village and neighbouring Santa Marta (Iguarán González 2014b; Iguarán González 2014a) suggested that this conflict between paramilitaries and tourism entrepreneurs could certainly be happening. After the limitation of coca growing and drug trafficking in the Sierra Nevada, the paramilitaries seemed to have found another source of income in the form of extortion of tourism businesses in the region. The paramilitaries might have thereby also addressed the power vacuum left by the government noted earlier. If the government took responsibility in protecting its citizens and their businesses, illegal organisations would probably not have that easy access to the tourism businesses and influencing the tourism development of Taganga.

5.5.5 Where is the government in all of this?

In regards to tourism, there was little regulation from the government side, both locally and nationally. So far, only one activity had been regulated by the authorities, exercising their political power over parts of the tourism sector. The tour companies wanting to offer the treks to the Lost City needed a permit issued by the Colombian Ministry of Culture. These permits were closely monitored; therefore at the time of fieldwork there were only four tour companies licensed to offer these tours (Field Diary, 2015). The permit is necessary as the trek passes through territory that was inhabited by indigenous peoples living in the Sierra Nevada with little connection to the modern world, and to protect the actual ruins of the Lost City at the archaeological site as well as for environmental protection of the surrounding of the archaeological park (Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia - ICANH 2016). All other tourism activities seemed to be largely unregulated by the government, at best, self-regulated by the tourism actors and the free market.

However, the unregulated development affected areas that should be regulated, such as the illegally-run businesses mentioned earlier. They seemed to be operating with little government interference from local authorities such as the tourism police. This shows that even though it is the role of the government to provide the legal businesses with a safe environment and level playing field for all businesses, the government did not meet their obligations that they promise they would by collecting tax from the legal businesses. Instead, it encouraged the unfair competition by not exerting the power invested in them to control or regulate the tourism sector.

Adding to the issues of unregulated tourism development, there were important infrastructural problems that did not seem to be addressed by the local government. These problems of lack of water, unreliable electricity, rubbish in the streets, and unpaved roads were further intensified by the development of the tourism industry that also relies on these resources in order to function well.

The biggest and most pressing issue that almost all of the respondents addressed in the interviews was the limited freshwater supply in the village. During the data collection there was only water available in the bathrooms and kitchen of the hostel for two or three hours per day (Field Diary, 2015). There was a lack of infrastructure to get water from the nearby mountains to the village. Furthermore, there was no second rainy season in 2014, leading to a scarcity of water in the region. One business owner recalled that there was no running water in the village from March until August 2014, but instead water was brought in by trucks by the City of Santa Marta (Business Interview 16, 2015), which was also observed while being in the field (see Figure 5, section 2). The people of Taganga protested these circumstances with road blocks on the only accommodation road leading in and out of the village. This led to tensions with the local tourism businesses, as their guests could not get into or out of Taganga. One foreign entrepreneur recalled:

> *“It was crazy. It looked like a Third World country here, like somewhere in Africa. People were sitting at the side of the streets with plastic containers, begging for water, and carrying it back to their houses. And due to the road blocks the tourists couldn't get out of the village. They had to go with their entire luggage on those little fishing boats and were taken by boat to Santa Marta so they could manage to reach their flights. It was crazy!”* (Business Interview 22, 2015)

Again, the local government had failed, this time to provide its citizens with basic services. Some of the better off tourism businesses received some extra water by ordering their own lorries with water tanks once or twice a week in order to run their operations properly (Business Interview 16, 2015). However, one interviewee also pointed out that some locals did not pay their tax or for their services, for example as the illegal tourism business failed to do, therefore the government might not see the urge to invest in the infrastructure of the village (Business Interview 16, 2015).

There also seemed to be a lack of regulations or enforcement of regulations regarding pollution. The pollution in the village went three ways: auditive, visual and environmental. The auditive pollution was one that had been addressed by the government. Some years ago various bars and discotheques were playing loud music for their guests until the early morning, which could be heard in many parts of the village (Thieme, 2012). However, the community of Taganga protested against this with the local government and fought for their values of a peaceful fishing village (Business Interview 25, 2015), which can be seen as part of their cultural embeddedness. Now there was a regulation in place that these establishments can only play music until 2 am in the morning (Field Diary, 2015). These regulations were mostly enforced, it seemed. However, they were only enforced regarding tourism businesses, not private households. An excerpt from the field diary illustrates the noise pollution by locals near tourism establishments:

> *"Saturday, February 28th: I cannot believe it! The neighbours are playing loud music from 6 am on! I am furious and very sleepy still, obviously [after a night out]. And once more* [they play] *the … vallenato music* [local music involving at least one accordion] *... I cannot listen to it anymore, especially after just 3 hours of sleep. I am surprised no other neighbours are complaining; the ones next door have a baby (and a toddler); I'd be furious as a mum. I try my earplugs – can still hear the music. […] I was worried about the party people in the hostel, should worry more about the locals blaring their music..."* (Field Diary, 2015)

Visually the village also seemed "polluted" by tourism in some parts, taking away from the charm of an authentic fishing village it wishes to propagate. One of the pollutants was the many signs put up by the tourism businesses advertising their services (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Signs and advertisement on one of the main roads of Taganga. Source: Author.

The signs were, however, necessary as there was no official signage on the roads. More specifically, the streets in the village are numbered instead of having street names, but there were no signs on the streets telling a tourist which street they are on. This made precise navigation in the village much more difficult. So these informal signs that were found all over the village were necessary for the tourists to find their way to the desired business, and tourism businesses to attract their customers.

Lastly, the village was also polluted to some extend with rubbish on the streets that sometimes it was not collected on a regular basis (Business Interviews 19, 26, 2015). This seemed to be an ongoing problem for quite some years as newspaper articles suggest (Comunidad de Taganga salió a la playa a recoger la basura 2011; Perez Mier 2001). In 2007 even the national government was involved, when the then president Uribe ordered the army and police to help clean the beaches of Taganga (Presidencia de la República 2007). However, at the time of fieldwork, it seemed like the fundamental problem of rubbish collection had still not been solved by the local government authorities.

With all those problems affecting especially the locals, but also the tourism businesses in Taganga, the question remains how the village and its inhabitants organised themselves to change these circumstances. According to the interview respondents, at the time of the study there were no associations in the village actively working on these issues. One

association, “Taganga es Colombia”, was mentioned by one respondent (Business Interview 16, 2015). However, it could not be established if the association, consisting of 35 tourism businesses, had any impact on addressing the problems Taganga was facing. In a local television interview from August 2015 (Pasión Por Santa Marta 2015) as well as newspaper articles (Muñoz 2015) after fieldwork, the chairman of the association gave the impression that they were only now starting out and hoped to work with the city of Santa Marta to tackle the challenges such as fresh water supply and insecurity. They hope they can transform Taganga from “el infierno al paraiso” (Pasion Por Santa Marta, 2015), from hell to paradise. Therefore, it can be seen as a private initiative not instigated by the local government to increase the cooperation between the city of Santa Marta and Taganga.

There had been few government initiated actions so far. In 2012 round tables were set up by the City of Santa Marta addressing issues such as public policy, sexual exploitation, illegal construction, corruptions, and business in general (Alcaldía de Santa Marta inició mesas por la seguridad y convivencia en Taganga 2012). These round tables were open for everybody to participate in. However, according to a local interviewee, these round tables did not really serve to resolve those issues, but were rather about much talking with no action (Business Interview 18, 2015).

Generally, it seemed that the village is not very well organised as a community and lacked the social relations between all the members of the community, no matter if locals or outsiders. Therefore problems arising from or intensified by tourism were hard to address within the village, and the cooperation with the City of Santa Marta was scarce, possibly due to the lack of organisation within the village. This lacking organisation could stem from the way Taganga has developed over the last two decades. Since the development of tourism, which kick-started the development and growth of the village, was self-initiated and unregulated by the government, maybe the tourism entrepreneurs did not feel the need to get together and work together. This, then, could have led to a weak relationship with the City of Santa Marta, as there was nobody to speak for the interests of the community in Taganga.

The lack of self-initiated organisation could also be grounded in the local culture. One respondent pointed out: “Everyone works together for commission, but for the rest, everybody works for themselves” (Business Interview 19, 2015). This sentiment was also shared by another respondent (Business Interview 15, 2015). However, it could be argued that the co-operation between the tourism businesses and the villagers in general might

have been better if the local government had intervened earlier than 2012 to encourage open communication between the parties.

Largely, the lack of government involvement in the tourism development of Taganga is difficult to explain. One possible explanation could be that the neighbouring city of Santa Marta had received the majority of political attention by the City government of Santa Marta. This could be due to the size of Santa Marta of over half a million inhabitants, and also the importance of Santa Marta as a domestic tourism resort. The City of Santa Marta government seemed to have focussed their efforts in developing tourism rather on the areas of Rodadero, a popular beach resort with high rise hotels and holiday condominiums in a suburb of Santa Marta, and in the city centre itself, reviving colonial buildings as boutique hotels and restaurants. This was also reflected in the promotion of tourism in the region by the City of Santa Marta. Their website and promotional material focused heavily on Santa Marta itself, only mentioning Taganga as a day trip possibility (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016f). The strategic tourism plan of Santa Marta for 2012 to 2015 includes general measures to improve, for example, education, but even in the section about tourism development Taganga was not mentioned. Instead it was focussed on developing general transport such as the international airport, cruise tourism, and the city centre of Santa Marta. Taganga was only included in the plan of constructing moles for diving and boat transport, and might be indirectly included in the measure mentioning the certification of sustainable tourism for the beaches of Santa Marta (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016e). While on fieldwork, none of those measures mentioned in the plan that could be related to the tourism development of Taganga seemed to have been implemented. They could neither be observed nor did the tourism businesses mention any of them. Therefore it can be assumed that they are unlikely to be implemented in the near future.

This shows that Taganga seemed to have received little planning attention, apart from the re-development of the beach front in 2009, in which planning the locals were not involved (Business Interview 25, 2015). Generally, it can be said, that there have been plans and recommendations, with some effort by the city like the implementation of the round tables. However, none of these have been successful, mostly because they were seemingly not followed through with. Fuelled by the lack of organisation in the village community, one respondent summarised the sentiment in Taganga:

> *"We have been forgotten by the government, both of the district and the national. They don't help us. Nothing. They just forgot about us. They don't help us with the security issues, nor did they invest money here. We don't know what will happen to us in the future."* (Business Interview 25, 2015)

It is possible this will finally lead to the village organising itself more and trying to exert more influence on the City Hall in Santa Marta. Another local respondent seemed more spirited, stating that they have to fight back, because they cannot leave the situation like it is (Business Interview 15, 2015). Maybe the newly resurrected association "Taganga es Colombia", which was mentioned earlier, might be more successful in campaigning.[38]

5.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the tourism development in the village of Taganga. It first drew on the historic development of the region and the community itself, before then looking at specific issues that fostered or hindered tourism development. The examination makes clear that the tourism development in Taganga was self-initiated, and has pretty much remained like this ever since, with seemingly little involvement of the government or authorities. Some issues, like the security situation, have been addressed by the authorities; however, they have not contributed to solving the underlying issues that foster the insecurity. The lack of good social relations within the community and not lobbying for their issues in an organised manner meant that it was difficult to take influence on the local government and demanding the just enforcement of laws and regulations as well as the provision of basic services and infrastructure. The local government might not have felt pressured into investing into Taganga. This power vacuum seems to have been exploited by now by non-industries and informal businesses. In order for the government or the village community itself to regain control over this power, great efforts will be necessary. But even if they manage to do so in the next years, it is still questionable if Taganga could

[38] Since fieldwork in 2015, a new City government of Santa Marta has been elected in 2016. Some of their measures implemented so far addressed some of the issues mentioned in this chapter, including a deep clean of the beach and marine waters of Taganga in April and June 2016 (Se realizó limpieza en las playas de Taganga 2016), putting up public recycling containers in June 2016 (Puntos limpios móviles en Santa Marta 2016), and launching free English for tourism classes beginning in August 2016 (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016a).

recover from both its poor image and the environmental and social damage that has already been done to the community.

6 Explorations of Embeddedness of Tourism Development in Salento

6.1 Introduction

> *"Salento is a great place to laze away a couple of days. The saloons are full of men in straw trilbies drinking aguardiente (sugar cane brandy) poured from large chrome urns on the bar, then wiping their noses on their ponchos. Horses and dogs stand waiting outside. Mexican trumpets blast down the lamp-lit streets. There are tourists here, but it doesn't feel like they boss the place, not yet."* (Rushby 2014)

This chapter analyses the tourism development in the small town of Salento, situated in the Andes, in the coffee-growing region in Colombia. The town has seen some tourism development within the last 10 years, and is becoming more popular with backpackers. The chapter first gives a historic overview of the tourism development in Salento. After that, the backpackers and their influence on the town's tourism development are discussed. The next section then investigates the development of tourism businesses in the town. Lastly, the political economy of the tourism development in Salento is analysed by looking at the various actors involved and their relations as well as reactions to tourism development. The findings presented in this section build on primary research, consisting mainly of information provided in n=28 interviews, of which n=13 were with backpacker tourism business owners in Salento, n=1 with a representative of the city hall of Salento, n=1 with two representatives of the regional Chamber of Commerce, and n=13 interviews were held with n=21 backpackers who stayed in Salento. Furthermore, the data includes extensive field diaries and field photography, as well as secondary sources such as policy documents.

6.2 Background to Salento

Salento is a town in the Andes, in the central region of Colombia, in Quindio, one of the smaller departments of the country. It had a little over 7,200 registered inhabitants in the municipality, a number that has not changed much in the last 10 years (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015), with about half of the population living in the urban area of Salento, the other half in the rural surroundings, according to a 2005 census (DANE 2005). The town

lies about 25 km north of the department's capital Armenia.

Salento was founded in 1842 and was the first modern settlement in the department. It is situated along the Quindio part of a former trading route between the Southern city of Popayan and the capital Bogota. In 1830 the liberator of parts of South America, Simon Bolivar, travelled this route and ordered an upgrade of the roads; this upgrade was later carried out by political prisoners who subsequently settled in the area of Salento as they were given land to farm by the government. This led to the founding of a small settlement which later developed into the town of Salento (Alcaldía de Salento 2016).

The main economic activities of Salento were agriculture and tourism (Alcaldía de Salento 2016). In regards to agriculture, the main produce consisted of coffee and dairy (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). The farms seemed to be mostly located in the outskirts of the village and on the land surrounding the core community, what the city hall called the rural area of Salento. The respondent from the city hall estimated: “I would say 50 to 60 % of all employment in town is provided by tourism; the rest of the people here work in agriculture, gold [mining], commerce, and at the dairy plant” (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). However, the commerce, such as the numerous handicraft shops, is also mostly linked to tourism; so considering the backward linkages into the local economy, a conservative estimate could be that tourism directly and indirectly supported 70 % of all jobs in Salento, but could have been even higher.

Salento has been a fairly popular tourism destination among domestic tourists since about the year 2000 (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). Especially tourists from the cities within a few hours’ drive such as Calí (three and a half hour’s drive from Salento) and Medellin, (five hour’s drive) came to Salento on the weekends or during holidays. Some families from those cities even possessed holiday homes in the town (Business Interviews 9, 13, 2015). Before the beginning of the 2000s there was not much tourism due to lack of a well-maintained road to Salento, which restricted the access. Furthermore, the nearby Cocora Valley (‘Valle de Cocora’), one of the main attractions of the region, was not developed for tourism, and was little tourism businesses in the town (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). Also, with guerrilla activity in the area until about 2002 the security situation did not allow for tourism to develop much; but the security situation has improved greatly since with effort from the police and the armed forces (Chaparro Mendivelso and Santana Rivas

2011); Field Diary, 2015), and especially in the past five years the general improvement of the security situation in Colombia, with guerrilla and paramilitary groups only active in remote parts of the country. Peace talks started in 2012 and a peace agreement was signed on November 24th 2016 (Colombian Congress ratifies new Farc peace accord 2016; *FARC, Colombian Government Make Progress on Disarmament Plan* 2016).

Regarding access, Salento is located 8 km off the Ruta 29, a dual carriageway connecting the nearby cities of Armenia and Pereira. The road leading from the carriageway into the town was the only paved access route into Salento. Most of the roads within the centre of the town were paved and in good condition. The road from Salento to the Cocora Valley had recently been paved to ensure easier access for tourists. Both Armenia and Pereira operated small airports, mostly serving domestic flights, but also international flights from Fort Lauderdale and New York in the US, and Panama City. Both cities also had big bus stations with frequent overland bus service to most parts of the country. From Pereira's bus stations, there were three daily direct buses going to Salento. From Armenia, the bus service was more frequent, with busses leaving about every 20 to 30 minutes during the day to go to Salento. Within Salento and its surrounding areas, the four-wheel drive Willy Jeep (see Figure 15) served as both regular bus service to nearby villages and the Cocora Valley, but were also used like taxis.

Figure 15: Willy Jeep parked on the main square in Salento, with the booth serving as dispatch point for the drivers. Source: Author.

Geographically, Salento sits on a small mountain plateau and is surrounded by mountains

and valleys. Nearby, in the lower lying part of the town called Boquia, the river Quindio flows through a small valley. The main lifeline of the town was the main square with the church and the adjunct Calle Real, the main shopping street (see Figures 16 and 17). It was in this area of the town that most of the commerce is located, especially shopping and restaurants, as well as some hotels. This was also the flattest part of the town. Some hostels were also located in the centre, but the majority were on the outskirts of the town.

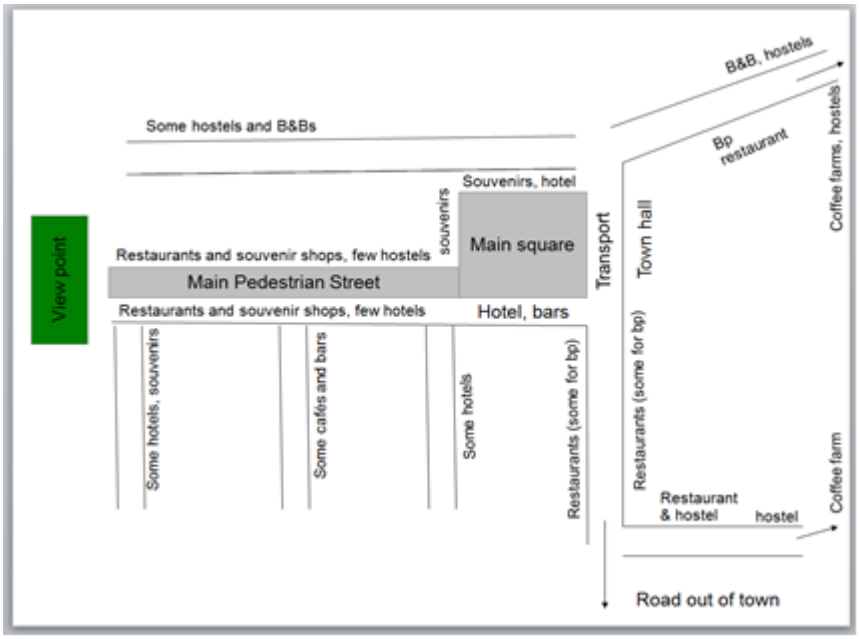

Figure 16: Stylised map of Salento with distribution of tourism businesses; “bp” being an abbreviation of backpacker. Source: Author.

Figure 17: View of the centre of Salento from the view point at the end of Calle Real. Source: Author.

At the end of the Calle Real a small mountain rises, with steps leading up to a small park providing views of the town and surrounding valleys (see Figure 17). Nearby on another hill, a viewing platform had been constructed for tourists for views into the Cocora Valley. At the end of the Cocora Valley the National Park Los Nevados is situated, the third most visited national park in the country[39] (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia 2016). The national park stretches over four departments, one of them being Quindio. It is dominated by the volcano Nevado Del Ruiz. The mountains and rivers of the national park supplied most of the water to the Salento area, also for irrigation for the coffee farms and other agricultural activities.

Observation during field work suggested that the general infrastructure of the village was adequate, with reliable supply of water and electricity, and regular rubbish collection. There was also a central sewage system. However, at one of the town's round table meetings some members of the town pointed out that during high season in January, when most of the town is booked out, the sewage system was not sufficient and smell developed in the neighbourhoods surrounding the treatment plant (Field Diary, 2015). Another shortcoming, also concerning festival times and weekends, was the parking situation, and has been pointed out by one of the respondents (Business Interview 9, 2015) and could also be observed during the festival in town, when side streets and front gardens were used for parking (see Figure 18).

[39] The National Park Los Nevados might be the third most popular in the country, but it receives only less than 20 % of the visitors that each of the two most popular parks receive each year (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia 2016).

Figure 18: Front lawns used as vehicle parking on a side street during the town's festival. Source: Author.

The main tourist season was in December and January, with the busiest time being the first two weeks of January, when there was a week-long celebration of the founding of Salento, with many domestic tourists coming into town (see Figure 19). There was another busy season over Easter.

Figure 19: Mainly domestic tourists crowd the main street of Salento during the weekend of the town's festival in January 2016. Source: Author.

The main attraction for both domestic and international tourists visiting Salento seemed to

be the landscape, especially the nearby Cocora Valley with its wax palms, the national tree of Colombia, which was also expressed by the interviewed backpackers as one of the main reasons to come to Salento. The tourists were also attracted to the town for its well-preserved colonial architecture typical for the coffee growing area. In 2014, CNN voted Salento as one of the 10 most beautiful villages and towns in the world in regards to unique architecture (Kiniry 2014). This list, according to the respondent from the City Hall, has further boosted the images of Salento and attracted more domestic and international tourists. However, none of the interviewed travellers referred to the CNN publicity. Apart from the landscape and the architecture, Salento was also famous for its trout fish that was farmed in the nearby rivers, and sold as signature dish in many of the restaurants in town. Furthermore, at the time of fieldwork four coffee farms offered regular tours that lasted between 30 minutes and three hours on the growing, collection and processing of coffee for tourists. One of the farms was within a ten minute walk of the town; the other three were between 45 minutes and 2 hours walk outside of town. All of the farms offered the tours in Spanish, three of them also in English.

Salento and its citizens still seemed to be culturally embedded and deeply rooted in agriculture, and took pride in their agricultural heritage. This could be observed, for example, through the traditional dress of the local men with their panama hats and ponchos, and also through the activities and competitions during the important festival of the town's founding in January; for example, when local farmers competed against each other in a mule loading competition (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Farmers from around the region compete against each other in various agricultural competitions such as loading a mule, watched by tourists, in the course of the festival. Source: Author.

6.3 The backpackers of Salento

6.3.1 Introduction

This section begins by describing out the different travel styles of the backpackers that visit Salento. This includes the characteristics of the travel styles and how they influence the consumption choices of the travellers. Further on, the social embeddedness between the backpackers is analysed, as well as the relationship with the host community, and their implications on consumption decisions and the production of backpacker tourism in Salento.

6.3.2 Characteristics of the backpackers in Salento

In Salento, three different kinds of backpackers could be observed: the conventional backpackers, of which 13 were interviewed in Salento, flashpackers, of which eight participated in the study, and artesanos, which were only observed, but not interviewed[40]. As described in the Taganga chapter, the conventional backpackers and flashpackers share many characteristics, but differ especially in their length of stay. In Salento, the eight flashpackers all travelled between 2.5 and 4 weeks, whereas the interviewed conventional backpackers travelled between six weeks and more than over a year, one couple even with an unknown trip length that they expected to be longer than 2 years (Backpacker Interview 5, 2015).

The average length of stay in Salento for the interviewed backpackers was less than 3 nights, with almost 60% staying for only two nights or less. One of the interviewed hostel owners described this as a change in the backpacker market, as it seemed to them that the travellers were now only “ticking the box” of having been there, and referred to them as

[40] The artesanos were mostly in town during the time of the town's festival in early January. After that, there was only one more encounter between artesanos and the researcher in Salento. This suggests that the artesanos are only coming to Salento for the festival to sell their products, but for other times it might not be viable for them to stay. As the respondent from the City Hall in Salento seemed not to be very friendly towards artesanos, they might be seen as unfavourable by the local government, and there might even be some actions taken against their informal businesses from the side of the authorities. This would be a topic that needs further investigation to make an informed decision on why Salento is not very popular with the travelling artisan community.

flashpackers, but more in the sense of being in and out of a place in a flash (Business Interview 9, 2015). This sentiment was supported by the evidence given by the interviewed backpackers. One pair of friends that travelled together stayed for only one night in Salento, but managed to do the main activities in their short stay, the 6-hour hike in the Cocora Valley and a guided tour at a coffee farm, within their less than 24-hour stay in the town. As for reasons why they were rushing through they stated that they only have a limited amount of time to travel in Colombia and wanted to see as many places as possible (Backpacker Interview 17, 2015). Other backpackers, however, who did not have such a tight travel plan, also stayed longer in Salento than they expected, as they enjoyed the laid back atmosphere, landscape and activities (Backpacker Interviews 3, 5, 2015; Field Diary, 2015). Additionally, during field work the researcher also met about a handful of backpackers that stayed for several weeks until up to two months in Salento who wanted to really experience the place (Field Diary, 2015).

All of the five Latin American backpackers that were interviewed in Salento travelled short-term, between 2.5 and four weeks. They cited their limited annual leave as a reason for their relatively short trips (Backpacker Interviews 1, 3, 17, 18, 2015). However, there were also three European backpackers who only travelled for 2.5 weeks in Colombia, stating similar reasons (Backpacker Interviews 9, 17, 2015). This is supported by looking at the age and occupation of the interviewed travellers. Regarding the age of the backpackers, of the interviewed travellers for this study, 70% of the respondents were older than 26, and over 80% were professionals rather than students, meaning they might have a higher disposable income when travelling. The higher disposable income of being a working professional could have enabled, especially the Latin American backpackers, to participate in travelling. They might not have had the funds to travel while they were students, but once they started working, they were able to access the regional and international travel market as tourists, as all of them were experienced backpackers in both Latin America and some also overseas in Europe and Africa (Backpacker Interviews 1, 18, 2015).

Secondly, the higher disposable income of professionals also enabled the backpackers, both from Latin America and other parts of the world, to spend their travel money on activities and/or superior tourism products such as private accommodation instead of staying in a dorm room (Backpacker Interview 7, 18, 2015). The backpackers who stayed in private rooms rather than dorms said that they do so because of privacy, especially

when travelling as a couple, but in their opinion it would still be much cheaper than staying at a hotel and would thus provide them with a budget to travel longer or to spend on other activities (Backpacker Interview 18, 2015); furthermore staying at a hostel would also provide them with the possibility to mingle with other travellers, linking to a possible importance of being socially embedded into the backpacker community (Field Diary, 2015). There was no difference between Latin American travellers and those from the rest of the world in this regard. For the solo travellers, they preferred to stay in dormitories as it would provide them with the possibility to meet other travellers more easily (Backpacker Interviews 3, 19, 2015). In addition to the accommodation sector, some of the interviewees also stated that since their trips are short, they do not take or have the time to cook, but rather eat out in cafés and restaurants (Backpacker Interview 17, 2015). But also some of the long-term travellers pointed out that food was part of the experience of a country, so they would treat themselves for dinner every night while self-catering for breakfast and lunch (Backpacker Interview 5, 2015). To be somewhat culturally embedded into the host community, in this case through food, might therefore be an important aspect for the travellers. This might also have business implications for the hostels as kitchens might become less of an asset for a hostel, especially for more upscale hostels. Backpacker restaurants and cafés might therefore become more important and could adjust their offers accordingly.

Interestingly, some of the interviewed and observed backpackers discovered eating out in Salento as another favourite activity that they did not anticipate beforehand. Specifically, the backpackers were surprised by the food that was on offer in the town. While some of the travellers wanted to try the local cuisine, a Canadian traveller who had been in South America for four months was happy to find food that is not Colombian:

> *"There are a lot of cafés and bars here, and also traveller cafés. That is so great. They have big portions for reasonable prices, like at that Brunch place [popular American backpacker café]. I am so tired of the Colombian food, of rice, and beans, and plantains, and stuff. So I am trying to avoid it. But here the food is really good."* (Backpacker Interview 23, 2015)

A vegan traveller was very impressed with the vegetarian and vegan food on offer in the town, something rather untypical in Latin America (Backpacker Interview 17, 2015), as was

the researcher (also a vegan). Further, some upscale restaurants in town offering European-Colombian fusion food were very popular with European and Latin American backpackers alike, as for example, a Chilean backpacker went to one of the more upscale backpacker restaurants twice in his three day stay in the town (Field Diary, 2015). These findings indicate that while local food is part of the traveller's experience of a place they also seem to enjoy variety in their food, especially since it could be argued that the cuisine throughout Colombia is not very refined or diverse, as expressed by some of the backpackers (Backpacker Interviews 5, 23, 2015). The backpackers frequenting these restaurants and traveller cafés were also happy to spend a little more money on the food as it was of good quality. The local restaurants, particularly the ones offering a set menu, were perceived to be cheap, but even the more upscale restaurants were still perceived to be of good value in comparison to their home countries (Backpacker Interviews 5, 9, 12, 15, 2015).

Regarding other activities, the data collected throughout showed that for all of the interviewed backpackers the landscape and experiences in the landscape such as hiking were one of the main reasons to come to Salento, and apart from one group of friends (Backpacker Interview 18, 2015), all of the travellers of the study hiked in the Cocora Valley. Some of them cited that this was their most memorable activity while in Salento (Backpacker Interviews 9, 14, 24, 2015).

Furthermore, touring a coffee farm while in Salento proved to be a very popular attraction for the interviewed backpackers. 85% of them participated in a guided tour on one of the farms, making it the second most popular activity after the hiking in the Cocora Valley. One backpacker stated about her motivation:

> *"I really wanted to come to the coffee zone, because of the nature, but also because of the coffee. We did the coffee tour on the farm here, and I loved it. I work with coffee [in the country where I live], and I wanted to see how it is grown and learn more about it. The tour was my favourite part of the stay in Salento."* (Backpacker Interview 17, 2015)

Interestingly, a small group of three Chilean backpackers, staying at a hostel with adjunct coffee farm run by a foreigner preferred to go to a coffee tour on the outskirts of the town,

run by a Colombian. They stated that too many cultural intricacies would be lost in translation if they attended an English speaking tour as Spanish native speakers (Field Diary, 2015). This might indicate that there could be cultural differences or preferences for certain activities for Latin American travellers and for travellers from the rest of the world. These preferences could be further explored to develop possible tailored tourism products for both traveller groups. It also indicates a different level of cultural embeddedness of the Latin American travellers and the non-Latin American travellers into the host community.

Concerning the further development of activities, most of the interviewed backpackers were satisfied with what is on offer. Nevertheless, some travellers pointed out that the outdoor market could still be developed further, for example with more activities (Interview 23, 2015). This does, however, not mean that they all want organised tours, but rather that there is a lack of information on what is on offer[41] and the lack of sign posting for hikes, for example. Quite on the contrary, tourists were actively discouraged to go hiking further than the Cocora Valley by themselves without a guide. The locals argued that there had been incidences with hikers getting lost in the National Park and having to be rescued by helicopter, which is expensive (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). Therefore, in the communication of the hostels and other tourism businesses, they all told the backpackers asking to go on two or three day hikes, to get a guide.

There was also no map material of hiking trails or the national park available to buy or rent, not even at the local mountaineering shop (Field Diary, 2015), even though there was a map displayed in the centre of the town on the wall of a house that had all the hiking trails around Salento marked (see Figure 21). This could almost be seen as pressuring the backpackers to use local guides to provide them with income, as was perceived by a backpacker (Backpacker Interview 10, 2015). One of the interviewed travellers still went hiking by themselves and returned after 2 days of trekking in the National Park without a problem, citing the activity even as their favourite of the stay in Salento (Backpacker Interview 24, 2015). Another backpacker, however, gave in and went trekking for 2 days with a local tour company, but returned rather disappointed and pointed out that it was possible to do this trek into the National Park without a guide, especially for experienced hikers, and that having a guide was somewhat a waste of money (Backpacker Interview

[41] At the beginning of the field work the tourist information booth, which would provide information of activities, was still closed except during the festival; it only opened in the last week of field work at this case study location. (Field Diary, 2015)

10, 2015). The frustration of the travellers might stem from the fact that going with a trekking company for a multiple day hike cost about COP$100,000 (equivalent to about £30) per day (depending on the size of the hiking party), which is the equivalent of staying at a hostel dorm for four or five nights (Field Diary, 2015). It, however, enables employment for guides from the area and ensures the safety of the travellers. Nevertheless, it could be argued that in this case the locals exert the power over information, such as maps or proper sign posting, in order to promote hiking with guides and tour companies.

Figure 21: Map of Salento displayed in the main street. Even though it says “For sale here” on the red sticker, it could not be bought at any shop at the time of fieldwork. Source: Author.

Additionally, one backpacker pointed out that there could be a problem with the buses leaving Salento, as they are sometimes quite limited in frequency and therefore very popular, especially when going directly to the nearby city of Pereira. The backpacker suggested that there should be a possibility to pre-book the bus, which seemed important to them, particularly when travelling on a relatively tight schedule (Backpacker Interview 14, 2015). The frustration of not being able to make a bus or a connection could also be experienced by the researcher as she was leaving the case study location during the week during shoulder season. When arriving to the bus stop more than half an hour before the minibus was supposed to leave, it was already full with both travellers and luggage. More travellers arrived wanting to travel on this bus going to Pereira, but at the end along with the researcher had to take another minibus about 30 minutes later that goes to the city of Armenia, and then change into a bus there that would take them to Pereira to travel

onwards, adding 1.5 hours to the whole trip (Field Diary, 2015). Pre-booking, bigger busses or a more frequent service could avoid frustration among the travellers and locals taking those busses, and might also alleviate of the traffic situation in the town, especially during weekends and the holidays, as discussed under section 2 of this chapter

6.3.3 The social embeddedness of the backpackers

All interviewed backpackers stated that they socialised with other travellers during their trip, indicating a deep social embeddedness within the backpacker community. From the interviews and observations it could be gleaned that the socialising was used to share travel stories, chatting, finding possible travel partners, or finding other travellers to share activities. For example, the researcher met a fellow German female solo traveller on the bus to Salento, then went on to go on the Cocora Valley hike with her the following day. In the Willy Jeep to the valley they met three other travellers who stayed in different hostels in the town, and then hiked the whole day together (Field Diary, 2015; see Figure 22). Social relations can form rather spontaneously as in the example mentioned, and be limited to a short amount of time, for instance for one dinner or a couple of hours of activities. Or they can be formed for a prolonged period of time, depending on the length of stay in one place, and sometimes end up in people travelling together for a while.

Figure 22: Group of international backpackers hiking in the Cocora Valley. Source: Author.

Especially the hostels seemed to be the primary meeting and socialising points for the

backpackers, where they meet and formed social relations that might then be taken further into going out for food together, sharing activities, or even travelling together. The following excerpt from the field diary illustrates this point:

> *"I head to the kitchen/social area again. [Two other backpackers that the researcher had spent time with the days before] are there. We decide to make a fire in the fireplace. It is raining quite heavily again and it is really cold. We ask [one of the hostel staff] if we can light a fire. He says sure and brings us some wood and paper to light the fire. It is more cosy and warmer immediately. I make some tea for us and we rearrange the couches to make the place more like a living room. We chat, read, and I write a bit. The German guy [who had spent the last two dinners with the little group] then comes back from Cocora and joins us, drying his wet clothes by the fire. […] A little later the American and young German [who had also joined the group for a dinner earlier that week] join us too, also drying their clothes. They will be heading off to Pereira for couchsurfing at a family there tonight [that the American guy has organised]."* (Field Diary, February 7th 2015)

The socialising also often seemed to influence how people might perceive a place or a hostel, especially for solo travellers. The following anecdote was observed at the hostel the researcher stayed at for the duration of fieldwork in Salento:

> *"While I am on the internet in the reception, a guy comes in and asks for availability. He is staying at [another well regarded hostel in town] and hates it. Says it is very antisocial, people would only be staring at their smartphones."* (Field Diary February 3rd, 2015)

This was an interesting situation, as some backpackers in the hostel the researcher was staying in were complaining that the WiFi of the hostel only worked in the reception area, but not in the kitchen/living room area (Field Diary, 2015). This, in fact, might have fostered more face-to-face socialising between the guests of the hostel as described in the excerpt from the field diary above, as the backpackers are not hiding behind the screens of their smartphones and tablets that might create a barrier in approaching other travellers.

Furthermore, the socialising also seemed to influence the decision-making of the

backpackers. On the one hand, there were the spontaneous decisions on people joining in on going out for dinner or drink at a local watering hole and a game of *tejo*[42] (Field Diary, 2015). On the other hand, the socialising was often used to also exchange recommendations for further travels, on places to go, hostels to stay in, or activities to do. All of the interviewed backpackers mentioned talking to their fellow travellers about further recommendations, either for Salento when they had just arrived, or for places they were planning on travelling too. One interviewee stated that she trusts the recommendations of fellow travellers more as she got to know these people and they share a similar taste in their travels (Backpacker Interview 3, 2015). This shows that the networking between the backpackers is a very important part of decision making, and also might have economic implications for backpacker businesses, not only in the place where the travellers exchange the recommendations, but also further down the road quite literally.

In addition to speaking to backpackers in hostels, restaurants and during activities like hiking, the respondents also used guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet*, websites and blogs, as well as booking and rating websites such as TripAdvisor and HostelWorld to decide on their choices for accommodation, food, activities and places to go. Although some interviewees used a guide book as an addition (Backpacker Interview 3, 9, 15, 17, 2015), the travellers mostly relied on online information, both before and during their trip. Almost all of them looked up hostels on TripAdvisor, which seemed to the most popular travel planning tool throughout. Some of the backpackers cited that they like to check and pre-book their accommodation in advance especially during the holiday period in January, as places could get booked out (Backpacker Interview 23, 2015). For the Argentinians the pre-booking was important because they had difficulties getting US dollars in Argentina at that time as explained in the chapter on Taganga, and they would rather spend their cash on food or activities, not on accommodation if they can pre-pay it (Backpacker Interview 18, 2015).

The online recommendations from other travellers were seen as more reliable than guidebooks, as two backpackers in the same interview stated (Backpacker Interview 14, 2015):

[42] Tejo is a local sport and social activity involving throwing a stone disc over a long distance at clay-filled pots that contain little packages of gun powder.

(**Researcher: *"So where do you get your information for the trip from? How are you planning it?")***

Italian Interviewee: *"I use the internet a lot. I look at website such as minube. They have lots of pictures on there. So if I like the pictures, if it looks pretty, I will go there. You just get more of a feeling for place, like, following your intention. And I rather go with the recommendations of other travellers."*

German Interviewee: *"Yes, I see it the same way. I also talk to other travellers for tips and recommendations. I take notes of them, so I can come back to them and don't forget them. They are first hand experiences. And they are the latest news and experiences; you know, they have just been there a few days or weeks ago."*

Italian Interviewee: *"Yeah, I completely agree! For the guidebooks... like, sometimes the recommendations of the Lonely Planet are not correct, they are too old. Like here in Colombia, they tell you not to go to some places because they are too dangerous. And then you talk to other people who have just been there, and the place is completely safe."*

So recentness and shared interests seemed to be an important point for the backpackers regarding the information and recommendations. They rather trusted their fellow travellers on rating websites or blogs than guidebook authors and publishers, which might indicate a shift in the power to 'make or break' destinations and tourism providers. Where it seemed that, for example, the *Lonely Planet* guidebooks would put backpacker destinations on the map (Business Interview 9, 2015; see section 4 of this chapter), more recently the power of knowledge and knowledge sharing has shifted back to the backpackers. While word of mouth was still an important mean to exchange this knowledge, the internet provided an even bigger space, reaching more travellers, pre, post and during the trip, a motion that will be further discussed in chapter 7.

It can therefore be said that socialising, and hence the social embeddedness within the backpacker community, plays and important role in the backpacker experience, for spending time with people from other parts of the world, and to exchange recommendations. However, one of the respondents also reflected more critically on socialising with other travellers:

> *"You kind of stay in this backpacker bubble; you spend more time with backpackers than with locals. I guess it makes it easier, just staying in your comfort zone."* (Backpacker Interview 23, 2015)

Once the travellers got out of their 'bubble' though, the interviewed backpackers all felt very welcome in Salento and had no complaints in regards to hospitality or friendliness of the locals, but rather praised them as very hospitable, friendly and approachable. However, one anecdote shows that not always all is just pure friendliness of the locals:

> *"We had socialised a bit with the locals. For example at the viewing platform of the Cocora Valley, and at the restaurant. Although the guy we talked to at the viewing platform asked us for a tip. Not a lot, really, almost nothing, so there is no problem. You know, more like 'Could you tip me?'"* (Interview 17, 2015)

This shows that probably informally working 'tourist guides' might talk to unsuspecting tourists and then want to be paid for their services. In this case the tourist was from Latin America, where the habit of 'tipping' seems to be more common. A traveller from another part of the world, however, might get the feeling of being cheated into a service they did not ask for. A few more experienced backpackers from Argentina were already more cautious of the locals, maybe having been exposed to this kind of behaviour before in other parts of the continent. When asked about if they socialised with people from Salento they said: *"No, we didn't socialise or haven't had any contact with the locals here, even though we speak the same language. It's just more about sales, so I'm not interested."* (Backpacker Interview 18, 2015).

Further, there might also be a difference in how the Latin American backpackers were treated in comparison to backpackers from other parts of the world, as two friends travelling together, one from Europe, the other from Venezuela, pointed out:

> **(Researcher: *"Do you think it makes a difference that you are Latin American, travelling here in Latin America?")***
>
> Venezuelan Interviewee: *"I think it's easier to get in contact with people as a native*

speaker [of Spanish]. Not many people speak English here. But they don't mind if you are speaking in English; they are used to it."

(Researcher: *"Do you think though it makes a difference that you are latina? Do you think they treat you differently?")*

Venezuelan Interviewee: [shakes her head]

Italian Interviewee: *"Yes, yes! I can tell you. They do. In the way how they look at you. They cannot take advantage of her, because she is not stupid, she is not a tourist, she looks local."* [Turning to their friend] *"Because you do look local."* [Venezuelan nods their head] *"I don't, you don't as well, Juliane. So yeah, you feel safer at some points."* (Backpacker Interview 17, 2015)

As this excerpt of a conversation shows, there might also be differences in how Latin American backpackers are treated by the local *Salentinos*, since they might not be able to assess if the travellers are Colombians or from other parts of the continent. This might make a difference in informal pricing, for example for street food, or like described in the example above, when asking for tips. Interestingly, none of the Latin American backpackers was aware of the possible different treatment; it was only pointed out by this European backpacker travelling with her Latin American friend.

One difference that all of the interviewed Latin American backpackers pointed out though was that they might have an advantage of being native Spanish speakers when socialising with the locals, as this makes getting in touch and communication in general easier (Backpacker Interviews 1, 3, 17, 18, 2015). English seemed not to be widely spoken, especially by the locals (Field Diary, 2015). A Canadian backpacker with little Spanish knowledge complained about the employees of the tourism office not speaking English; if they did, it would be more helpful for international travellers to get background information on Salento (Backpacker Interview 23, 2015). Interestingly, another Russian backpacker perceived that "everybody speaks English here, this makes [Salento] inauthentic" (Backpacker Interview 10, 2015). But this seemed to be a single case as throughout the interviews, the non-Spanish speakers mirrored the sentiment of the Canadian, that not speaking Spanish or the locals not speaking English respectively would sometimes make

getting in touch and communicating difficult.

But, as one hostel owner recognised, the backpackers seemed to make an effort to get in touch with locals and at least try to learn a few words of Spanish: *"And it is also about the cultural exchange. Language is an important part of that, and the international backpackers try to speak Spanish."* (Business Interview 2, 2015)

However, the lack of English language skills of the locals, and the lack of Spanish language skills of the backpackers might have made some business transactions a little more challenging, especially when it came to bargaining. Here again, some of the non-Latin American travellers felt that they were charged more, especially by street vendors, since they are foreigners (Backpacker Interview 23, 2015). They would therefore always haggle for prices on the street, but not in shops. Most of the travellers saw the prices in shops and hostels as set prices, not worth haggling for (Backpacker Interviews 10, 14, 23, 2015). While the non-Latin American backpackers would haggle for souvenirs (Backpacker Interviews 9, 14, 15, 23, 2015), an Argentinian backpacker expressed a different feeling:

> *"I don't haggle much because I am very bad at it! [laughs] … Especially for handicrafts I don't haggle. I know how much work goes into it. It is so laborious, and I appreciate the effort that goes into it. So I don't haggle for prices there."* (Backpacker Interview 3, 2015)

This might be an indication for a little cultural difference, especially if the traveller is involved into handcraft or even the artisan community in their home country as well, like this Argentinian backpacker (Personal Conversation noted in field diary, 2015). However, generally the prices for accommodation, food and souvenirs were experienced as fair, therefore maybe the backpackers, apart from many not speaking Spanish, might not see the necessity to haggle much at all.

6.3.4 Summary

The findings of this section provided useful insights into the types of backpackers and how they spend their time in Salento; what they look for and what they are willing to spend time and money for. Further, it was revealed that the knowledge exchange between travellers

online and offline has given the power of information from guidebooks back to travellers. The consumption patterns of the travellers and how the social embeddedness between the backpackers as well as the locals play out might have important business implications. The following section further explains this in the development of the tourism businesses in Salento.

6.4 Business Development of Salento

6.4.1 Introduction

This section first looks at the historical tourism development of the town, and how tourism has grown over the years. It then gives an account of how tourism, especially backpacker tourism, is integrated into the town's activities. This section will also look at the main drivers of this tourism development.

6.4.2 History of Tourism Development in Salento

Also due to the security situation, tourism did not develop much in the region until about the 1980s, and only became a major activity from the early 2000s. The regional government attributes tourism development to a series of events in the late 1980s and 1990s. They argue that the coffee farmers of the region had to find alternative sources of income due to the drop in the price of coffee in the late 1980s (Gomez, Restrepo and Gonzalez 2009; Governorship of Quindio 2008). In the early 1990s then the department of Quindio started promotional activities under the theme of *"Somos café y mucho mas"* (translation by author: 'We are coffee and much more'), that also promoted domestic tourism, for example in the capital of Bogotá (El Tiempo 1992). In 1995 the Parque Nacional de Café, a theme park centred around coffee, and in 1999 the Parque Panaca, a farming theme park, opened within a one and a half hour's drive of Salento, to draw more tourists into the coffee zone of Colombia (Gomez *et al.* 2009). However, in 1999 a massive earthquake shook the region, destroying the capital of the department, Armenia, and with it many houses and livelihoods of the people living in the region as well as infrastructure such as bridges, roads, electricity cables, and schools and hospitals (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 1999). The Governorship of

Quindio (2008) also cited the destruction following the earthquake as a reason why coffee farmers looked for alternative income streams other than agriculture, and developing more rural tourism on farms. In 2011, the UNESCO included the Coffee Cultural Landscape, of which Salento is part of, into their World Heritage List due to its unique natural, cultural and economic features (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2016). Although there was little published evidence at present, the inclusion into the World Heritage List might have further boosted the attractiveness of the region as tourism destination.

In Salento itself, domestic tourism developed slowly, then after the guerrilla moved out of the area, in the early 2000s, there was a more accelerated development (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015; Field Diary, 2015). In the beginning, a few hotels and restaurants already opened in the 1990s, like Las Palmas Bed & Breakfast, that opened in the mid-1990s and was one of the first accommodation providers in town (Business Interview 9, 2015; Field Diary, 2015). But tourism really started to develop when the security situation improved greatly and the road into Salento was paved in the early 2000s, and more accommodation providers opened their doors, ranging from family-run, rustic accommodation to two boutique hotels that opened in the last 7 years (Field Diary, 2015; Business Interviews 9, 27, 2015). Therefore, Salento had already developed into a fairly popular domestic tourism resort, especially for day trippers and long weekends, before international backpackers arrived.

Backpacker tourism was initiated in 2004 by outsiders of the village. A British and his Colombian wife from the region opened the first hostel in Salento, in a 100-year old plantation house in the outskirts of town, with just five rooms in total. The owner recalled:

> *“I came to Bogota as a tourist and was staying at a hostel there. And this Englishman came in, and we started talking. You know, this was the only hostel in Bogota back then […] And the owner of the hostel was like a one-man tourist information for Colombia. […] There weren't many hostels [in Colombia], there were a few dotted around. There was one in Bogota, one in Cartagena, there was one in Taganga, there were two in Cali, and there was one in Medellin, and that was about it. And he [the Englishman] said: 'I got a house that would be fantastic for a hostel.' 'Cool, where is that?' He said 'Salento.' So we basically looked at a map and there was nothing on the map, had a look into the guidebooks, there was nothing in the*

guidebooks. […] But then I had a chat with [the hostel owner from Bogota] and I told him that there is a house for a hostel. And he rolled his eyes and said 'Yeah, wow... Where would that be?' 'Salento.' And his eyes would pop and he said 'Salento?! That's special! Salento needs a good hostel, the coffee zone needs a good hostel. You should do it.' So that was the start of it. So, three months, four months later I came back to Colombia, came up here, had a look at the place, and within a week I had bought the place. [...] Salento is in the perfect location to reach from Medellin, Cali and Bogota, and it's right on the gringo trail, a travelling route that most take. […] Between [my wife] and me, we pretty much dragged, kicking and screaming, Salento on the gringo trail. I mean, it was always a big destination for Colombian tourists, but never for Western tourists. When we started, there was like one foreign backpacker a month, no, one every three months coming through Salento. In the first year, we averaged 2 people per night." (Business Interview 9, 2015)

Following the opening of the first hostel and its subsequent success after being published in the Lonely Planet guide book, some locals started to get interested in the backpacker tourism business. The following year, in 2005, some locals got together and rented out rooms to international travellers in a house in the centre of town. However, this seemed to have been a rather unorganised and unregistered business, as one respondent recalls (Business Interview 9, 2015). In the same year the next hostel was opened by a Colombian from the region who had been living in the town:

"I did not have any experience in tourism before, I was a house wife. But that taught me to give attention to people and share things, which is what I am doing now with my tourism business. […] This is my house, so I offer love, friendship and respect. That is what this hostel is all about. So I do not accept drinking alcohol, taking drugs or any slagging off of Colombia. Respect is important. And it is also about the cultural exchange." (Business Interview 2, 2015)

In the next years it seems that only two or three more hostels geared at international backpackers opened, run by both Colombians and foreigners, but one even closed down after only a year (Business Interview 9, 2015). Further, more hotels and guest houses for domestic tourists opened, mostly run by locals; but also Spanish partners opened a bed and breakfast in 2007 which has since been popular with older international travellers and

domestic tourists (Field Diary, 2015). Around the same time, in 2007 and 2008, two coffee farms in the area started to provide guided tours for tourists on their farms. This activity provided to be highly popular with tourists, both national and international, and is now offered by 4 farms in the area. As of 2015, three of the coffee farms provide their tours also in English, responding to the increase of international, non-Spanish-speaking tourists visiting the town (see Figure 23; Field Diary, 2015).

Figure 23: Advertising for English and Spanish speaking coffee tours in Salento. Source: Author.

Then from 2009 on there seems to be an accelerated development of backpacker tourism in the town. In 2009 and the next three years more accommodation geared towards backpackers opened, run by foreigners, Colombians and also two local couples (Business Interviews 1, 12, 28, 2015).

> *"The house is the parental home of my husband and we lived here, although my husband works in Armenia. We saw the foreigners passing by the house. So we started to rent out two rooms. We have never travelled like backpackers ourselves or had any experience working in tourism, so we started to do research in what they needed. And we asked and listened to them what they want from a hostel. So they said a kitchen, internet, that it is clean. We provided all of that. Then we signed up with various websites [such as HostelWorld, Booking.com] and more and more people came. So we built more; more rooms, another kitchen… At some point we had to move into another house to make this one just the hostel. And we invested*

more, into the outdoor areas, bought mountain bikes… Now we are the number 1 recommended hostel in Salento on TripAdvisor." (Business Interview 1, 2015)

So even though these local business owner did not have travel experience as backpackers themselves and might have therefore lacked the cultural capital of the foreign business owners who had backpacked themselves, this local couple was able to acquire the knowledge through their guests. This might indicate that even though the knowledge power might primarily lay with the entrepreneurs with travel experience, there is also the chance to acquire it indirectly through the guests, if the business owners are willing to do so.

After the accommodation for the backpackers was in place, there seemed to be a surge to provide special catering and more activities to this market segment from 2011 onwards. In 2011, two restaurants opened, one run by foreigners, the other by Colombians from outside the village, offering a more international fare, away from the typical Colombian food (Business Interview 3, 2015; Field Diary, 2015). One year later, in 2012, two more specialty food providers opened, again one run by a foreigner, the other by Colombians from other parts of the country, catering mainly to backpackers. But coincidentally, both of these restaurants owners also stated that they also wanted to bring their speciality food to Colombians, who did not have much exposure to the kind of food they were offering in their respective establishments (Business Interviews 4, 7, 2015).

In 2013 then, activity providers addressed the gap in the market for more organised activities such as trekking for independent travellers and international backpackers. The three activity providers[43] interviewed all started operating in 2013 and are both Colombians not native to Salento as well as foreign (Business Interviews 5, 6, 8, 2015). The activities offered all centre around nature and the natural environment around Salento, the main drawing point of the region, as expressed by the interviewed backpackers.

6.4.3 Current Tourism Development in Salento

In the last few years, two more trends in the development of the backpacker tourism

[43] Activity provider in this case refers to companies or individuals who actually organise the activities themselves, carry the risk of the execution, and do not solely broke the activities like a tour agency. In Salento these include activities such as trekking and hiking tours, horseback riding and coffee farm tours.

market in Salento became more apparent, namely up-scaling and diversification. Firstly, in late 2014 a restaurant aimed at international backpackers opened, offering rather refined meals.

> *"The aim of our restaurant is to provide 100% home cooked and natural food to backpackers. As we have travelled extensively ourselves, the motto could be 'From backpackers for backpackers'. […] We fell in love with Colombia 7 years ago, and I always wanted to have a hospitality business. So this restaurant for me is the fulfilment of a lifelong dream. And here in Salento the choice of food is very limited. It is all trout, rice, and plantains. I also want to encourage other people to be more creative in the kitchen with their food. […] We source as much as we can locally, like the greens, salads, herbs; from our own garden and from the neighbours. Eggs, milk, cheese, free range chicken – we all get from our neighbours around here. […] It is a way to work with the local people, to help the community, and to be part of it. I mean, we even get lots of presents from the people; for example, one of the neighbours left oranges by the door the other day. […] So I use Colombian ingredients for European cooking. That is attractive to foreigners. I would say about 98% of our customers are foreigners, and 2% are Colombians, but that are rather local Colombians and friends. But our customers do not travel on a shoestring, they are more the flashpackers."* (Business Interview 13, 2015)

The restaurant closed down by mid- 2015 though, due to personal reasons of the owners (Personal Conversation with the owners, 2015). However, this approach also showed that the foreign business owners want to be socially and culturally embedded into the community, even enriching them (see also Business Interview 7, 2015).

Adding to the trend in upscaling, also by the end of 2015 a foreign-run upscale hostel opened its doors, welcoming its guests with another upscale restaurant and bar, and run in partnership with an entrepreneur who was already operating a successful hostel in Salento (Business Interviews 10, 28, 2015). This trend had also been observed by another hostel owner, who says that the travellers now ask more for private rooms than when they started out 10 years ago. They also observed that an older clientele was travelling in Colombia in general now, who would want to stay in more comfortable accommodation, hence the increase in demand for private rooms. They had therefore converted some of their former

dorm rooms into private rooms (Business Interview 9, 2015). These observations correspond to the characteristics of interviewed backpackers as discussed under section 3 of this chapter.

Apart from the upscaling, a second tendency seemed to be business diversification. Some established backpacker tourism businesses diversified their business activities, especially since 2013, mostly by expanding into the accommodation sector in the town. Some of the restaurants popular with backpackers now also offered hostel services (Business Interview 3, 2015; Field Diary, 2015), and so does one of the activity providers, whose aim it had always been to offer speciality accommodation.

> *"We have been offering the tours for over a year now, and we started with four different tours, and we were only focused on that. We knew we wouldn't start the construction [of the accommodation] until much later. The four tours that were on offer were one-an-a-half hours, two-and-a-half hours, three-and-a-half hours and four-and-a-half-hours. And we always allowed the people to pay whatever they wanted. You know, that money would go towards things like maintenance of the walkways, which requires a lot of labour. […] The project itself, what it is, is a number of different eco accommodations, one of which is called an eco-lodge […] which consists of a dormitory, a kitchen area, dining area, lounge, bathrooms, and a further two bedrooms on top which we will add later with two double beds. And we will also have up to 4 eco-cabins eventually."* (Business Interview 8, 2015)

When asked why they decided to offer further services, some business owners pointed out that there are still many gaps in the market here that can be filled, especially regarding offering activities that would keep the backpackers to stay longer in the town.[44] One of the hostels now offered semi-regular half-day trips to surrounding attractions as they are not offered by anybody else in the town (Business Interview 9, 2015). The expansion into accommodations seems interesting therefore, as there seem to be a lot of accommodation providers already[45]. This is especially true when looking at the overall numbers of the

[44] As discussed under section 3, the average length of stay in Salento for the interviewed backpackers was less than 3 nights.

[45] However, it has to be noted that for the numbers on the accommodation sector domestic and international tourism overlap. Further, during high season during the town's festival these boundaries of which is a domestic tourism accommodation provider and which is primarily accommodation for foreign tourists blur. For

registered accommodation providers, which were 96 at the time of the fieldwork (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). However, especially during high season during the festival, a lot of the accommodation was booked out, with some hostels even putting tents into their gardens to accommodate more travellers (Field Diary, 2015).

On the other hand, there were 65 restaurants businesses registered with the City Hall of Salento (2015). One of the interviewed business owners, running a restaurant themselves, pointed out that during high season there would not be enough restaurants servicing the number of visitors (Business Interview 13, 2015). This is especially true when considering that there were also day trippers visiting Salento, who might also want to eat there. However, during the weekend and the festival, more food was provided by food stalls and tents erected on the main square (see Figure 24). These tents though were seen by some of the foreign business owners as spoiling the flair and architectural heritage of the town square, looking cheap with their big advertisements of a Colombian soft drink and putting a myriad of plastic chairs out on the pavement (Business Interviews 9, 13, 2015).

Figure 24: Food stalls and tents on the main square providing additional food and seating to tourists during the festival. Source: Author.

Generally, the backpacker tourism sector seemed to be run by Colombians as well as foreigners across all sectors (see Figure 25). When it came to backpacker hostels, of the interviewed businesses, they were about equally run by foreigners, Colombians from other

example, one of the interviewed backpackers stayed at a boutique hotel for her stay as it was the only bookable option online (Backpacker Interview 14, 2015). It was also observed that several Colombian families stayed at the hostel the researcher stayed in during the festival week (Field Diary, 2015).

parts of the country and by locals. For the restaurants that catered especially to backpackers, they were mostly run by outsiders to the town, being either from other parts of Colombia or from abroad. The traditional restaurant, however, serving trout and catering mainly to domestic, but also to international tourists, were run by Colombians and locals. As for the touristic activities, the companies that offered activities popular with backpackers are also mostly run by Colombians from other parts of the country or by foreigners. The exceptions are the coffee tours on the farms, of which only one is run by a foreigner.

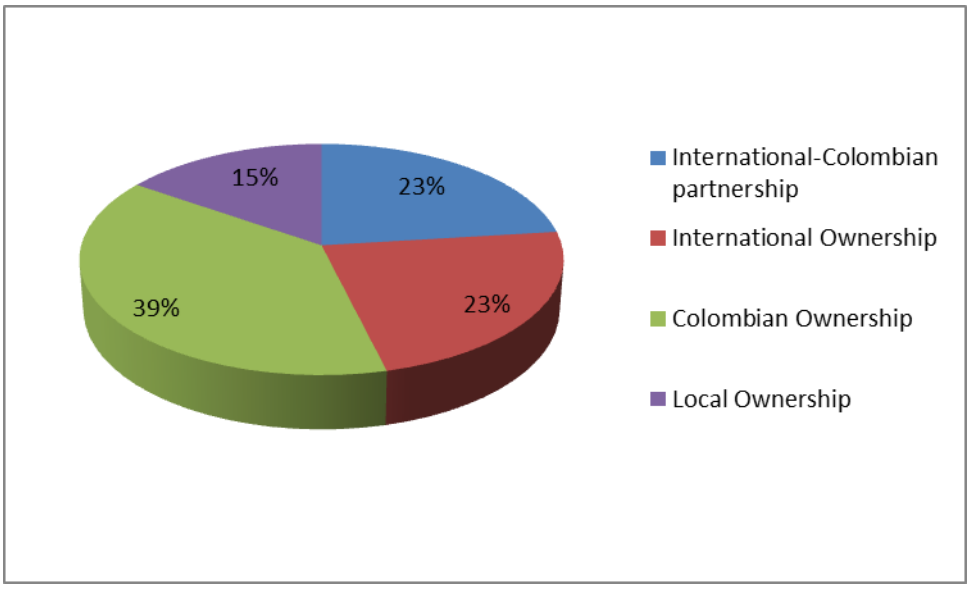

Figure 25: Distribution of ownership of the interviewed businesses in Salento by origin of the owners. Source: Author.

However, some resentment against foreigners could be detected by some Colombians and locals. They had the feeling that their town is somewhat overrun with foreigners and therefore the property prices were on the rise (Business Interviews 2, 12, 27, 2015). Together with one of the foreign business owners who also lived in Salento the foreigners running a business in the town were counted and verified by observation, and it came to less than 25, and not even all of them live in Salento or own property there (Business Interview 13, 2015). Rather, it was suspected by the foreigners that Colombians from the neighbouring cities of Cali and Medellin acquired property for their weekend and holiday houses there (Business Interviews 9, 13, 2015). One of the business owners pointed out that rather than the foreigners the property developers should be blamed for this development (Business Interview 9, 2015). However, both the locals and the foreign business owners shared the same concerns that the old people and other locals would move out of the town, and it would therefore lose its authenticity and appeal which is part

of their cultural embeddedness and also a draw for the tourists (Business Interviews 12, 13, 2015). A local business owner pointed out:

> *"The town has changed a lot in the last years. The old people move out of the town, because the cost of living has risen so much. They sell their houses for a good price here, and then move to a less expensive village in the surroundings where they can live comfortably off that money. I am afraid that the town will end up like Barichara [a well preserved colonial town in the department of Santander], a town of the rich. […] We are losing the culture and the peculiarities here when there will be less Salentinos."* (Business Interview 12, 2015)

Interestingly, a foreign business owner used the town of Barichara, to which the local owner referred, as a good example, saying it was well preserved and pristine. They were more concerned that Salento would become too much like an inauthentic "Disneyland" (Business Interview 13, 2015), while another respondent feared Salento might turn into something like the town of Boquete in Panama which in their opinion only consists of hotels, restaurants and realtors by now, "with the community squeezed into a corner" (Business Interview 9, 2015).

In conclusion, tourism, both domestic and international, had grown much in the town, especially since the year 2000, with an accelerated development since the late 2000s. However, both forms of tourism seemed to co-exist with some intersections. Backpacker tourism did not seem to be fully developed or the market segment exhausted up to now. Rather, there was still room for new products to be developed in all sectors. This did not mean, though, that there are no conflicts, underlying or apparent in the town. These will be explored in the following section.

6.5. Power Relations in Salento

6.5.1 Introduction

This section looks at the tensions and possible tensions in the town, and how they were addressed by the different actors to assess dynamics and power relations within Salento. Some of the tensions arose due to tourism; others were reinforced due to tourism

development. Firstly, the role of illegal businesses in the town is assessed. Then the relationship between tourism and the town is scrutinised, and how the local community reacted to the tourism development. Next, the influence of shadow industries on the town and tourism, and the response to them is evaluated. Lastly, this section looks at the involvement of the government and local political actors, and how they addressed the issues that arose due to tourism.

6.5.2 The tensions between formal and informal businesses

Some respondents running businesses in the town pointed out that there are illegal businesses operating within the town (Business Interviews 5, 9, 2015), while another stated there were not really any illegal businesses (Business Interview 7, 2015). However, businesses that were most likely to be unregistered could also be observed in the town with sign for rather informal-looking offering of accommodation advertised on various houses, such as in the one shown in Figure 26. One respondent stated:

> *"There is more tourism here now, but it is less controlled. To be honest, it is not nice anymore to do business. The government is now introducing new laws, standards and certifications for tourism. But for every legal hostel in town there are three illegal, and the government doesn't do anything about that. Those illegal hostels take business away from the legal ones who pay tax and everything."* (Business Interview 9, 2015)

Figure 26: Possible illegal renting out of rooms in the town as this was the only sign on the house; no hostel name or registration was displayed. Source: Author.

The number of three out of four hostels being unregistered and therefore illegal seemed a little high compared with the observations, but nevertheless especially during the time of the festival when a lot of tourists flocked into town, there were more signs for informal accommodation put up (Field Diary, 2015).

The representatives from the Chamber of Commerce of the region, when interviewed about the illegal businesses and lack of enforcement against them by authorities, responded that it was not in their hands. They explained that their role, at least of the two respondents talked to, is to teach the tourism businesses about norms and regulations so the businesses can apply for a certification as sustainable tourism business. If they are a non-registered and therefore illegal business, the representatives can only point out to them that they are illegal and encourage the business owners to register. The Chamber of Commerce would not have the power to prosecute illegal businesses; that would be the task of the tourism police. Another hostel owner then pointed out that their certification gets checked regularly by the tourism police, but that they never check the accommodation providers who are not on their list of registered businesses, which is why illegal businesses could operate relatively unchallenged (Business Interview 9, 2015). This sentiment was also supported by another business owner, stating that *"the laws are made for the legal businesses, not for the illegal ones; the more legal you are the more problems you will have"* (Business Interview 5, 2015).

However, on a different note, illegal businesses could also serve to explore possible new or innovative tourism products that are not offered anywhere else in the town. One of the interviewees operated an unregistered business, offering activities to primarily international backpackers on a semi-regular basis (Business Interview 6, 2015). They confessed that it was just too expensive for them to register their business for the moment, especially since they do not offer the activities on a regular basis that provided them with a regular income (Business Interview 6, 2015). If their product was further developed though and proved to be more popular, it could address some of the shortcomings of the lack of activities provided in the town as mentioned earlier.

6.5.3 Tourism and the town

As noted earlier, the town depended on tourism for income and employment. However, this did not mean that there are no conflicts between the town and tourism. One problem was pointed out earlier, which was the rise in property prices and subsequent displacement of locals. The choice to sell their houses and move to another village or town was a personal though, so the question is if there is anything the government of town itself can do about it, apart from trying to encourage their citizens to stay and not to sell their houses. However, one foreign business owner, who bought property themselves, observed that there seems to be a change in the land use, with more urban development happening, meaning more licences to build on formerly rural land are given out by the local government, contributing to a growing town (Business Interview 13, 2015). Another local respondent was also concerned with this development, fearing that Salento could turn from a town into a city in the near future (Business Interview 12, 2015).

Locals seemed to identify the foreigners living in the town as the culprits, as stated earlier. One business owner from the region had quite a negative view on foreigners:

> *"Sometimes the foreigners don't have respect for the local farmers. They don't do any social work, but patronise social problems that we have in the community. They are displacing the natives. I hope the government gives more respect to the locals than to the foreigners, but at the moment they don't. The foreigners buy the best land and then their businesses grow."* (Business Interview 2, 2015)

This assessment seems rather odd when looking at the data. As noted before, not many foreigners own land or a house in the town. Secondly in regards to social work, all the foreign business owners mostly employed people from Salento (Business Interviews 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 2015). Furthermore, some of those business owners emphasised that they want to make sure to give back to the community with their business, not only by providing an income to locals, but also by training their staff and encouraging their further education (Business Interviews 7, 9, 13, 2015).

> *"For the future I hope that the development will bring more legitimate money to the people [in Salento] and that their standard of living rises. I am not here to get rich. For me it is important that my employees do well. I am just happy when Colombians do well."* (Business Interview 7, 2015)

Moreover, the above statement from the regional business owner about foreigners seemed further skewed when looking at the opinion the local government seem to have of some foreigners. The representative of the City Hall pointed out that they were not happy with the way that some foreigners would abide or rather not abide by some of the laws in place. They stated that *"sometimes the foreigners want to put their own laws in place. But that would create disorganisation in the community! They need to abide by our laws"* (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). This was quite an interesting view, as especially foreign business owners pointed out that the town and the City Hall is not enforcing their own laws at times, as further explored in point 5.5 of this chapter.

So even though there was not a significant amount of foreign business owners and foreigners living in the town, the perception of the locals and Colombians living there can be a little skewed, maybe due to the success of the foreign-run businesses, or maybe because Colombians in rural areas had not been exposed to many foreigners due to historic reasons, and are therefore not so used to them. They might have perceived the influx of foreigners as losing control over their town and as a threat to their local culture.

Another point that led to conflict and could lead to more conflict if not resolved is the amount of tourists that come to visit Salento and its surroundings. The majority of the problems seemed to lie with the domestic tourism, as during the time of the town festival and also over Easter the town seemed to be overcrowded (Figure 5 earlier). The

overcrowding contributed to problems mentioned earlier such as lack of parking space for the individual vehicles that the domestic tourists use for their journey to Salento. A journalist of a regional newspaper estimated that up to 4,000 vehicles per day can come into Salento during high season (Herrera Castro 2014). In a small study the Chamber of Commerce executed during a festival in October 2014, they counted more than 7,200 vehicles and over 28,000 people entering Salento within a long weekend (Cámara de Comercio de Armenia y del Quindío 2014). Since there was only one paved access road and not nearly enough designated parking spots, this leads to traffic jams and unregulated parking (see Figure 4). The Chamber of Commerce (2014) counted 850 designated parking spots including parking along the roadsides of side streets in Salento. This shows that there was not sufficient infrastructure in place for the amount of tourists the town receives. There had been plans to build a cable car from near the main road over the valley to Salento, where people would leave their cars at an old *finca* (farm) near the main road and then would take the cable car into Salento (Business Interview 9, 2015; Quindío Noticias 2015). However, these plans had not been further considered so far. Moreover, the question would remain of who would finance such a big project, how many tourists could actually be transported by a cable car per hour, and if it is a good idea in general to build a cable car over a valley in a region that is vulnerable to earthquakes.

To address some of the issues that arose due to tourism or were enforced by tourism, as well as other issues the town is dealing with, in 2014 the "*mesa ciudadana*", the town's round table was initiated by two local tourism entrepreneurs working mostly in domestic tourism (Field Diary, 2015). It was open to everybody to participate in, and often includes member of City Hall for most meetings addressing certain issues of their area of expertise. Not only could locals, entrepreneurs or people who moved to the town voice their concerns here, the round table also started initiatives within the town. While on fieldwork, two entrepreneurs ran an initiative to engage the town's community, especially the younger ones, more into tourism. They therefore went into the local schools to educate the children and youth with tourism (Field Diary, 2015).

There were only a few backpacker tourism businesses involved in the town's round table (Business Interviews 1, 5, 2015). However, there seemed to be no foreigners participating. When asked why they would not partake at the round table, some respondents (few of whom had gone to some of the round table meetings before) said that there would be just

too much talking, but not enough outcomes (Business Interviews 9, 12, 13, 2015). Another, a local respondent pointed out his perception of the round table:

> *"I am not a member of the association. I don't think it can work. At the end of the day, we are all competitors. And people never have the same opinion, so there are always discussions and fights. So for me that is just a waste of time."* (Business Interview 12, 2015)

However, some of the foreigners had the idea to set up their own round table in 2016, so they could focus more on international tourism, which in their eyes the town's round table does not (Personal Conversation with Business Interview 13, 2016). Maybe they might also be able to address some of the issues in regards to foreign business owners.

Similarly, some of the foreign business owners were also unhappy with the representation in the City Hall. They bemoaned that the same clique had ruled Salento for a few decades and would often act rather in their own interest than in the interest of the town (Business Interviews 9, 13, 2015). As one respondent stated: *"As a foreigner you have no political voice here"* (Business Interview 9, 2015). This would provide a problem, as all foreigners are involved in international tourism, and not in domestic tourism. Therefore the legislation in regards to tourism might have been skewed towards domestic tourism, rather than also focussing on issues of backpacker tourism (Business Interview 13, 2015). In one of the foreigner's perception, even the locals had little interest or relation with their elected officials, but would still elect them. They had even though about running for mayor themselves to bring changes to the town, but knew they would not be successful (Business Interview 9, 2015).

The foreign tourists on the other hand were largely seen as positive since they consume hostels, food, handicrafts and drinks (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). However, the representative of the City Hall further pointed out that they are not so keen on the Argentinian backpackers that travel around Latin America by working, often exchanging work for free accommodation or selling food, which is illegal on a tourist visa and would take away business from the locals. When pointed out that there are also young Colombians doing the same thing the response was interestingly that foreigners are also to blame:

> *"He goes on quite a bit complaining about the artesanos and the backpackers that come here to work. I don't have the feeling that it is as many as [they] make them out to be. I also tell him that there are Colombian artesanos selling food in the street that I met earlier that week. He is a bit baffled, saying they must have that from the foreigners. I smile a bit on the inside; he surely has no clue about the artesano scene in his country."* (Field Diary, Jan. 29th, 2015)

There seemed to be the perception by both the local government and the regional media, that there were more foreigners than domestic tourists visiting the town and the surroundings like the Cocora Valley. The respondent from the City Hall stated that there would be 100 foreign and only 50 domestic visitors per day in Salento (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). A regional newspaper also stated that most of the visitors to the Cocora Valley would be foreigners (La Tarde 2015). However, in the weeks of the fieldwork this could not be observed. Rather, there seemed to be much more domestic tourism than international tourists. The perception that there are more foreign tourists than domestic could lead to resentment, and possibly blaming of the problems that tourism brings on just foreign tourists.

6.5.4 Tourism industry and the shadow industries

There was little evidence of shadow industries such as robbers, muggers or drug traffickers operating in the town. With regards to security, there did not seem to be any reported assaults on tourists, not during field work, nor did any of the respondents mention any incidents that they could remember. A local employee at one of the hostels described the town as so safe that they even leave their door unlocked while they are at work, and nothing ever has been stolen (Field Diary, 2015).

However, two issues that had been mentioned are prostitution and drugs. Regarding prostitution, they were primarily concerned with child prostitution (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). The town had taken its own activity against it; one of the main measures is a curfew at 9 pm every day, 10 pm on Saturdays, for all under 18-year-olds (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015). This rule seemed to be enforced quite strictly as could be observed while on field work in the town (Field Diary, 2015). The representative from the City Hall stated that his seems to pay off:

> *"There are results, it is working. There seems to be less alcoholism and heavy drinking amongst the youths. Same with prostitution. There is less now. And we are also monitoring our children and youths during the day. We just want to avoid the problems that tourism brings, the problems between tourism and the community."* (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015)

Further to the curfew, some of the accommodation providers seemed to work against child prostitution as well. On a website of a hostel they explicitly stated under their house rules and in an extra explanation that they do not allow drug use and prostitution on their premises, and that they enforce legally and morally law 679 from 2001 that sanctions sexual conduct with minors (The Plantation House Salento 2016).

When asked who would be asking for child prostitutes, the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce responded that it would be mainly international tourists who would create the demand for child prostitution. However, this kind of behaviour, including prostitution in general, could not be observed within backpackers while on fieldwork, nor was it mentioned by any of the interviewed (Field Diary, 2015). This is a topic that would need further investigation to make an informed conclusion.

In regards to drugs, not much prevalent illegal drug use among backpackers could be observed, but some recreational use of marijuana among some locals, which seemed not untypical for Latin America (Field Diary, 2015). However, there were some indications for drug use among some travellers, which is supported, or at least not discouraged by some hostels. As two backpackers told me during an informal dinner conversation:

> *"I share the table with a French-Swiss couple. They are staying at Hostel [anonymised] […] They also tell me that there is a group of Israelis in the hostel, and that the drug dealer providing them came into the hostel last night and offering drugs for sale. Nothing covered up, but very obvious."* (Field Diary, Jan. 29th 2015)

Nevertheless, one of the Colombian business owners also blamed the Colombians themselves on the development of some drug tourism:

> *"I hope that not the very young backpackers come here that look for drugs, party and sex. The problem with that is that the Colombians will offer it to them if they demand it. They are interested in making money quickly without thinking about it."* (Business Interview 5, 2015)

In conclusion, the shadow industries seemed to not have a significant influence on the tourism and the town of Salento yet, and the community had taken immediate action against some of the developments to protect their children and youths. If this will work out in the future, especially in regards to the provision of drugs, remains to be seen.

6.5.5 Where is the government in all of this?

At first glance, the political embeddedness of the Salento community and the business owners appeared much deeper than in Taganga. The local and regional government especially seemed to be rather involved in the tourism development of the town. On a local level, there was a sub-secretary for culture, sports and tourism as part of the City Hall. There was a tourism plan by the City Hall (Alcaldía de Salento 2013). Even though the representative of the City Hall interviewed for this thesis stated that *"the plan is very complete, it just needs reactivation"* (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015), when analysed by the researcher, it seemed not very comprehensive and lacking concrete actions in order to address the issues raised in the plan.

The plan did also not distinguish between domestic and international tourism, and might therefore not have the appropriate measures in place to address the distinct issues created by both forms of tourism. That was somewhat surprising as the City Hall Representative (2015) stated:

> *"The backpackers are an important segment for us. They consume a lot here. They spend money on the hostels, food, handicrafts, drinks… And they are good for Salento. They spread the word about Salento, talk about the tranquillity here, the beautiful landscapes. And the backpacker tourism is more responsible tourism. They [the backpackers] try to learn the language, they communicate with their friends here and at home, and they plan their own trip."*

Taking this statement into account, but then analysing the tourism plan, it seemed there is some discrepancy between planning and action. The backpackers seemed to be welcomed by the City Hall, but in the official planning they are not distinguished from domestic tourists, even though the City Hall representative acknowledged the differences between the two tourist groups.

Furthermore, issues caused by tourism such as problems with the infrastructure were not addressed, but it did mention educational measures to teach the locals about tourism as well as, for example, foreign language training. In how much these measures were realised though is rather questionable. The planning of measures did not seem to follow the plan much as the representative from the City Hall pointed out that they needed to revive the plan (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015).

Some of the issues mentioned earlier were rarely addressed by the City Hall. Firstly, there was a lack of information for tourists apart from private initiatives such as the information provided by the accommodation providers or restaurants. However, the information the tourist might receive from these could have been skewed as most of the Colombian business owners interviewed worked on a commission basis with each other, and would therefore tend to recommend businesses from which they receive commission if they send tourists. The foreign-run businesses hardly worked with commissions but rather on a service-based cooperation. One foreign respondent stated:

> *"The tourists ask us about recommendations of coffee farms they can visit, restaurants, sometimes they also ask for hostels. I recommend the businesses if their service is good, even if I dislike the owners."* (Business Interview 8, 2015)

As for information provided by the City Hall of Salento, tourists could not rely much on the tourist information. It was observed that during the busiest time of the year, in January, the tourist information booth was not occupied (Field Diary, 2015). During the week of the town's festival the booth of the tourist information was occupied for only a few days, after that it was left empty again. But the representative of the City Hall pointed out that there would be full-time staff for the tourist information office from the beginning of February (Interview Salento City Hall, 2015), which was then confirmed by observation during the last stages of the field work (Field Diary, 2015). However, when the researcher visited the

tourist information booth, posing as a new arrival, the businesses that were recommended by the staff for both catering and activities like coffee farm visits were only local businesses; they did not mention or recommend any foreign-owned businesses. This might indicate that the tourist information run by the City Hall might not have been impartial and might have discriminated against the foreign-owned businesses. This might be due to local family ties of the staff or recommending the businesses of their friends and acquaintances rather than foreign businesses, indicating the social embeddedness of the locals into the political sphere. It might even be possible that the tourist information staff received commission from some of the businesses, therefore rather recommended them than the ones who do not pay commission, as most of the foreign-owned businesses did not, as mentioned above. The power of giving selective information to the tourists is therefore in the hands of the staff of the tourist information; this might be a reason why the interviewed backpackers rather rely on information given by other travellers rather than these official sources.

As mentioned earlier, apart from the lack of an official tourist information office, there was also little signage provided by the city to guide the tourists to possible attractions such as the viewing point. Furthermore, the hiking trails within the town as well as around the town were not signed, for example the trail to the Santa Rita waterfall (Field Diary, 2015). This seems also true in the Cocora Valley, their biggest tourist attraction, where there were only sporadic and not always comprehensible sign posts as shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27: A sign about hiking trails in the Cocora Valley, at Acaime Reserve. Source: Author.

This lack of signage might mean that the community might have missed out on additional

income due to tourists not being able to find attractions that they did not know about. The lack of signed hiking trails might have also contributed to the occurrence that hikers had gone lost in the national park. Maybe with better sign posting this could be prevented.

Apart from a lack of signage, the most pressing infrastructural issue for the town seemed to be the parking situation for cars and buses, especially during the weekends and the festival week. This issue was also not sufficiently addressed by the City Hall. As mentioned earlier, there had been an idea to have a cable car transporting the tourists from the main road to Salento without their cars. There were no concrete plans though and there also seemed to be no other plans to address this major issue. This problem was less created by backpackers, but more by domestic tourists who come to the town by car for the day or weekend. Recently, the problem has also spread to the Cocora Valley, where over the Easter weekend in 2016 busses would block the access road so that other cars could not pass, due to the lack of sufficient bus parking in the valley (La Cronica del Quindio, 2016). This would also be a problem created by domestic tourists as they do not take the Willy Jeeps to the valley but their private car[46]. However, it remains the question if the Willy Jeeps could transport as many tourists to the valley as the busses can, and if the jeeps would be the most sustainable option, instead of creating car and bus parking.

Another issue that was raised by some of the business owner is the selective application and enforcement of laws by the City Hall. This was especially related in regards to noise pollution. One of the business owners pointed out that they lived in the centre of the town and during the week of the festival the loud music would play until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning without regards to the residents (Business Interview 8, 2015). Another business owner complained about the newly held independent church services at 8 or 9 am on Sunday in a property right next to their hostel, waking the guests of the hostel often much earlier than they want to (Business Interview 9, 2015; Field Diary, 2015). According to the business owners, complaints about the noise pollution to the City Hall fell on deaf ears.

At the weekly meetings of the town's round table, there was usually a member of the City Hall present. They either discussed with the citizens a problem they have raised, or present legislation of their department (Field Diary, 2015). This might have ensured that

[46] The Willy Jeeps drop the tourists off at the valley, and do usually not park there, except if they wait for customers to take back to Salento.

the City Hall knows what issues their citizens and business owners were dealing with and they might have been able to respond promptly to those. Furthermore, it also informed the locals about possible new legislation that might affect them or their business. Lastly, it also enabled the cooperation between the City Hall and the locals when planning campaigns or events, such as the forum called “Turismo si, pero no asi” (translation by author: Tourism yes, but not like this) which was held in November 2014 in cooperation of the City Hall, the Chamber of Commerce and the town's round table (Business Interview 5, 2015). The one-day conference saw several keynote speakers and working round tables addressing various issues in regards to tourism in Salento. At the round table workshops the participants tried to come up with solutions and plans on how to tackle those issues (Cámara de Comercio de Armenia y del Quindío 2014). Even though these initiatives ensured the political embeddedness of the policy makers and the local community, if any of the findings and plans had been translated into actual legislation or actions, remains questionable.

However, the Chamber of Commerce, even though not necessarily a government institution, was also further involved into tourism development in the town. While on fieldwork in the beginning of 2015, they were promoting a campaign for businesses to acquire the certification as a sustainable tourism business by visiting all registered tourism businesses in town and offer them support to reach the standards of the certificate (Interview Chamber of Commerce, 2015):

> *“We work as consultants for the tourism businesses. We teach the norms to the businesses. The norms cover topics such as identifying the environmental and cultural impacts, for example the impact of rubbish, or the impact on the local fauna. Then we teach them means to minimise the impact. There are programmes that address the saving of water, saving of energy, minimise the usage of chemical cleaning products, and so on. When they comply to all the norms, a certifier will check their business and then award them the sustainable tourism business certificate. … The norms come from FONTUR and the ministry. They apply to the whole country, but the implementation depends on the Chamber of Commerce in the region.”*

While not specifically geared at backpacker tourism, the sustainable tourism certification

seemed to be a countrywide measure, initiated by the national government and implemented through their regional and local administrative arms. While in the regional department of Quindio the Chamber of Commerce seemed to promote this certification within the tourism businesses in Salento, in Taganga none of the respondents mentioned it, indicating that the regional Chamber of Commerce there did not promote it. The involvement of the regional government appeared to be crucial to implement sustainability measures that also affect the backpacker tourism businesses.

The Department of Quindio furthermore passed some laws that affect the running of tourism businesses, especially restaurants and bars. There was a law on the sale of alcohol in restaurants and bars. In this case, the alcohol sold in restaurants needed to be bought in Quindio as they have a higher tax rate and the department seemed to want to avoid that business owners buy their alcohol in neighbouring departments with a lower tax rate (Business Interview 13, 2015). According to one of the business owners running a restaurant, it was enforced very strictly with regular controls of the alcoholic stock of the restaurants. If a bottle did not have the paper strip seal of the local authorities that showed that it was bought in Quindio, the business would be fined, and it could even lose their license (Business Interview 13, 2015). This law, along with the relatively strict law on food hygiene was seen by the respondents as manageable and clear, and therefore easy to comply with (Business Interviews 7, 13, 2015).

On one hand, there seems to be strict regulation by the regional government in regards to tourism businesses, on the other hand, there is little or unclear regulation on other issues. A major difficulty is the ownership structure of the Cocora Valley, the biggest tourist attraction of the region. Even though the Cocora Valley has been a protected area since 1985 (El Heraldo 2014), the land of the valley was private land of about 4 families that mostly use the land for farming cattle as seen in Figure 28 (Business Interviews 5, 9, 2015). The cattle, though, would eat the small seedlings of the wax palm, for which the Cocora Valley is famous for, therefore no young trees would come after (Business Interview 9, 2015). This will be a problem in the near future, when the current palms are dying, and no young trees replace them. Further to generating income through farming the land, one of the families, from the city of Cali, charged the tourists COP$ 3,000 (about £1) per person to cross their land along a walking trail (Field Diary, 2015).

Figure 28: Cows grazing in the Cocora Valley. Source: Author.

This land use could therefore not only lead to environmental problems, but the fractured ownership of the land also meant that it will be harder to implement regulations or measures in regards to tourism on the whole valley itself.

Adding to this problem was the national government. It seemed to have different interests than the community of Salento or even the farmers who own the land of the valley. On the one hand it also promoted tourism and the Cocora Valley as one of their touristic assets in their tourism promotions (ProColombia 2017). But only recently, after fieldwork was completed, the national government assessed the possibility of gold mining in the protected area of Cocora Valley and around Salento (ElTiempo.com 2016). The exact situation seemed a little unclear still at the time of writing, in regards to if actual titles for mining rights have been given to a multinational mining company or not (El Tiempo 2016).

However, the citizens of Salento were alerted and unhappy with this development, and organised petitions and marches (ElTiempo.com, 2016; Personal Communication with Business Interview 5, 2016). The activism against the mining seemed to be led by the town's round table and the City Hall, who seemed to fear not only for the touristic value of the region, but also for their water supply from the area.

Hence, there seemed to be an ambivalent view of the region by the government. One the one hand, it promoted tourism and wants to attract more tourists, and possibly tourism investment, to the region. On the other hand, it also considered using the region for agricultural and mining investments. These interests were also illustrated by this anecdote that happened while on a trip in the surroundings of Salento:

> *"We continue to an indigenous, old funeral site in a forest a bit further up the road. There is a single and a double grave. They are apparently from the Quindio Indians. [The guide] knows the farmer who discovered the graves. He sold the gold and artefacts; the tombstones have been used in construction, because they were so nice and plain. The bones rested on a kind of cloth; they picked it up and shook [the bones] onto the ground, where they turned into dust. So now all that is left are two holes in the ground. Apparently the Colombian government knows about these graves, but choses to ignore them, as they would have to declare the land national patrimony, and at the moment the land is leased out to Carton Colombia [a paper manufacturer that has a few plantations in the surroundings of Salento] to grow pines for their paper production (which in [the guide's] words brings more income to the government due to taxes they charge the company)."* (Field Diary, Jan. 28th 2015)

In conclusion, there seemed to be no stringent line that the administration is following. Rather, the interests of the local, regional and national government seemed to clash at times, instead of being harmonised. This leads to conflict and uncertainty, which might also influence the tourism development of the town, for both domestic and international tourists.

6.6 Summary

This chapter elaborated on the tourism development of the town of Salento. It outlined the

historic development of tourism in the region as well as in the town, especially in regards to backpacker tourism, with side glances at domestic tourism present in the region. It then characterised the backpackers that visited Salento, their consumption patterns and the social relations between themselves as well as between the backpackers and the locals. Regarding the political embeddedness of the community, this chapter also examined the issues that arose due to tourism development and how the development of international backpacker tourism added further issues to the agenda that needed to be addressed by the town and the government. Some of the issues, such as the handling of the shadow industries, have been addressed by both the local government and the businesses itself. As the town seemed rather organised, with their weekly round table and involvement of the City Hall, as well as the regular initiatives by the regional Chamber of Commerce, quite a few issues have been jointly addressed. However, there appeared to be a lack in understanding of international backpacker tourism by the City Hall, and generally with regards to legislation or measures, there seemed to be little difference made between the treatment of domestic and the international tourist, who have some similarities but also many differences. The tensions that could be identified were mostly between the locals and the foreigners, although they were mostly commented on by only the locals. Furthermore, there seemed to be a much bigger problem with the coordination of interests from the local and regional, and national government, which should be resolved before making further, bigger plans of the tourism development of the town and the region.

7 Discussion: The Embeddedness of Backpacker Tourism in Colombia

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the previous chapters in relation to the framework of the study. It compares the findings to existing literature on the identified topics and themes with the social, cultural and political embeddedness of the three main tourism actors. It also considers both case study locations and their commonalities and differences in tourism development that they have been subjected to. The chapter further explains the links between the consumption and production site of backpacker tourism development in those two case study locations. The chapter is structured by addressing the three main aspects of the theoretical framework, the social, cultural and political embeddedness, before summarising the effects of these kinds of embeddedness on the impact that backpacker tourism development has had on the investigated communities.

7.2 Social Embeddedness

7.2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3 (the theoretical framework of this thesis), social embeddedness assumes that there are no anonymous markets, as the actors in these markets are connected through social relations that influence their economic decisions (Mosedale, 2011). The social embeddedness could furthermore enable communal action within, or outside, the marketplace (Zukin and DiMaggio, 1990). This part of the chapter examines how the findings of this study relate to the social embeddedness. The social relations are discussed concerning the backpackers, also taking into account Ferguson's (2011) call for distinguishing between consumers (i.e. backpackers) from LDCs and developed countries. Further, the social relations between the backpackers and the local businesses, and between the local businesses, and how they influence the supply and demand of backpacker tourism in both communities are analysed. This relates to the initial research questions about the linkage of tourism production and consumption, how they influence each other, and how they are influenced by the power relations of the actors of tourism production and consumption. This all helps assess the impact tourism has on the host

communities.

7.2.2 The social embeddedness of backpacker tourism consumption and production

For all backpackers he information exchange seemed to consist as a major part of the travel experience. When looking at the results of this study, word-of-mouth is still very important for recommendations, like it was at the beginning of the backpacker tourism movement in the 1970s (Hampton 2013). This appeared to be especially grounded in the trust of opinions of other travellers as well as in the timeliness of information provided by the fellow backpackers. Generally, the information provided by hostels or tour companies seemed to be less important for the backpackers in this study. However, whereas guide books such as *Lonely Planet* and *Rough Guides* used to heavily influence decision-making for backpackers on where to go, which hostel to stay in or which restaurant to eat at, or which activities to do (Young 2009), the results suggested that the era of guidebooks might have been coming to an end with mainly online sources taking their place.

The findings of the backpacker interviews of this study emphasise the importance of internet sources, specifically booking and rating websites such as TripAdvisor and HostelWorld. These websites provide a larger space for knowledge exchange with hundreds or thousands of travellers. This exchange does now not only happen during the trip, as it mostly used to be in the beginning of the backpacker movement (Hampton, 2013), but also pre-trip and then post-trip to share the experiences, good or bad, with other travellers[47]. Comparing the results to other studies, Kain and King (2004) also stressed the importance of word-of-mouth information exchange in their study of Australian backpackers, but argued that the information on the internet was only secondary. Adding to that, Newlands (2004) suggested that more formal sources like guidebooks and internet blogs were more important for pre-trip information, and informal sources like other travellers while on the road. This, however, has probably changed in the past 12 years since the publication of their backpacker-specific studies. While Xiang and Gretzel (2010) and Fotis *et al.* (2012) further researched the role of social media in the travel planning phase, the use of social media for information exchange during the actual trip seemed not

[47] For further discussion on rating websites and the use of social media in tourism there are numerous studies. For a discussion on user generated content on social media such as on TripAdvisor, see (Miguéns, Baggio and Costa 2008); for a review on literature of social media use in the tourism and hospitality industry see Leung *et al.* (2013).

to be widely studied. Munar and Jacobsen (2014) found in their study on the use of social media and user-generated content websites of holiday makers in Mallorca that the tourists preferred to share visual imagery during the trip, but generally there was a low real time content sharing during the trip. This could, however, be also age related as the majority of their respondents were 40 years or older and/or travelling with their partners or family (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). This current study, however, found that due to smartphones and readily available Wi-Fi at hostels and restaurants the online sources and social media seem equally important to the backpackers while travelling, not just before or after the trip. The experiences and knowledge exchanged through those online platforms and through word-of-mouth were seen as more recent and therefore often as more accurate by the backpackers, and they provide a greater intersection of experiences rather than just the opinion of one guidebook author, who did not seemed to be seen as part of the backpacker community by the travellers. This shift away from guidebooks towards information from other travellers online and offline could be seen as a shift in power of travel knowledge from guidebook authors and publishers, back to the backpackers themselves.

This also means for the backpacker tourism businesses that there might be even more pressure on them now to deliver excellent service at all times, since experiences that are seen as negative by the travellers can be immediately shared online and might impact the business in the short and long term. Richards (2015) argued that the availability of Wi-Fi and the reliance of young travellers on their smartphones would enable a fast evaluation of the hostels on offer. This would therefore intensify the competition between the hostels, which has led to the upscaling of the properties that are discussed later in this chapter. Some of the interviewed businesses managed their online profiles on platforms such as TripAdvisor and responded to guests' comments, and placed a lot of emphasis on their TripAdvisor ranking, a practice that Grant-Braham (2007) deemed as essential for successful tourism online marketing. However, some of the businesses felt the anonymous rating encouraged unreasonable expectations and behaviour by some guests. This illustrates the power the travellers could exert over the businesses through the reviews they leave on rating websites, which reaches thousands of travellers every day. It represents a shift from the traditional word-of-mouth recommendations, where a negative recommendation would only reach maybe a handful of other backpackers. The shift of power to the consumer in regards to the information about their accommodation, food and

activity choices was especially significant in the backpacker and independent traveller market, as these travellers organise their own trips and do not rely on a tour operator to pick their accommodation and activity providers for them. This part of the social embeddedness, its expression within the information exchange between the travellers and its influence on the businesses clearly shows the linkage between tourism production and consumption, and their influence on each other.

Apart from exchanging recommendations, it seems that the interaction and social relations between the backpackers are very important to the travellers. These connections are either established before the trip, for example when travelling with a friend, or during the trip. During the trip, the hostels seem to be the most important place to meet other travellers and socialise with each other to exchange travel tales. Hottola (2008) described hostels as “safe havens” for travellers, as a place where they can interact with each other in a safe space. The hostel marks, in his opinion, a culturally safe space, where the backpackers are amongst their own culture and can relax from the possible constraints of the host culture (Hottola, 2008). This, however, assumes that the backpackers all share similar cultural backgrounds, which, as also found in this study, is not the case. Nevertheless, most Latin American and non-Latin American travellers in this study socialised with each other in the hostels, often using English as the *lingua franca* or Spanish when socialising with other Latin American travellers.

However, the hostels as Hottola’s (2008) “safe havens” for the travellers also allow them to ‘check-out’ of a destination while being there and therefore check-out of the reality of the host community. The financial power of the travellers in comparison to the locals makes this temporary mental leave from the destination possible, to rather stay in a safe compound and socialise with other travellers like themselves. The backpackers would stay within their ‘bubble’ while not addressing any of the issues of unequal global and local tourism development (Scheyvens, 2002). This can therefore arguably be seen as a reproduction of the global inequalities. This notion is further investigated in the next section, which discusses the interaction of the backpackers with the locals.

7.2.3 The social embeddedness between backpackers and locals

Speaking the Spanish language was perceived to make it easier to get in contact with locals by all the backpackers. Most non-Latin American backpackers stated they did not speak Spanish, which made socialising with locals harder in their opinion, as many locals did not speak English. Backpackers perceived knowing the language would enhance their travel experience and understanding of the culture. However, the Latin American backpackers, speaking the same language and coming from a similar cultural background, surprisingly did not socialise much more with the locals than the non-Latin American backpackers, but instead spent most of their time also with fellow travellers from around the world. Generally, the socialising with locals was mostly restricted to business transactions or for information exchanges, especially in Taganga. This is somewhat surprising as backpackers often claim that the cultural exchange is one of their most important motivations for travelling (Paris and Teye 2010). However, Aziz (1999) also observed that most interaction was limited to transactions in his studies on backpackers in Egypt.

Most of the activities for the backpackers in both research locations were offered in Spanish and English. This ensured that also non-Spanish speakers could get the most of their travel experience. However, often the activities offered in English were often executed by foreigners who settled in Colombia. Therefore some Latin American travellers preferred the activities offered in Spanish for more authenticity, if it was an activity related to the culture of the country, such as the coffee tours in Salento. In other instances, such as the diving in Taganga, the nationality of the instructor did not seem to matter to the divers much. This seems to be consistent with research by Daugstad and Kirchengast (2013) who studied authenticity in agri-tourism. These farms would “signify authenticity, originality, and idealised, traditional agriculture” (Daugstad and Kirchengast, 2013, p. 170), and are part of the cultural heritage while at the same time are part of the tourism industry. However, they found that the farmers would construct a *pseudo-backstage* which would be a temporary frontstage created for the tourists in order to convey feelings of intimacy and rareness, which would then add to the overall feeling of authenticity for the tourists. The farmers perceived this creation of the pseudo-backstage as being in control of tourism, and therefore having the power over it (Daugstad and Kirchengast, 2013). However, in this study the tourists seemed to have exerted a certain degree of power to decide what is

authentic, and this might involve the nationality of the farmer or the language in which the tours on the coffee farms are offered. E. Cohen and S. Cohen (2012) picked up on the power of authentication, which in tourism would often come from above from institutions such as the UNESCO and they deem as “cool authentication” and would often be rather political and can lead to a museumisation. On the other hand, their “hot authentication” is more of a social process that requires the participation of the tourists and is more of a dynamic process (E. Cohen and S. Cohen, 2012). The latter might therefore be the case still at the coffee farms around Salento, as the tourists decide which one they deem as more authentic, and the farms have up to now no institutionalised authenticity certification.[48]

However, with regards to the backpackers’ origin, nationality did seem to matter at times, therefore reinforcing Ferguson’s (2011) call to include consumers from LDCs into PE studies to assess these possible differences. Some of the results indicated that the local host communities treated Latin American backpackers differently at times, especially in the informal sector like street vendors. They got offered a “*precio latino*” (translation by the author: Latino price), whereas the non-Latin American “gringos” might have paid a higher price. This indicates that the Latin American backpackers might possess higher bargaining power for prices than the Western backpackers. However, for most of the interviewed backpacker tourism owners the nationality of their customers did not seem to make a difference though, so the pricing based on nationality might be mainly applicable to interactions with informal businesses. This might be different to the experiences Asian backpackers have travelling in Asia. Some studies suggest that being from the same region and “looking local” got backpackers exposed to discrimination that other locals who the backpackers look alike experience, for example in regards to race or ethnicity (Muzaini 2006), or they got caught between power struggles between different ethnic groups (Teo and Leong 2006), while Chan (2006) examined the gaze that Vietnamese hosts cast on their Chinese customers. Drawing from these studies, it might therefore be possible that local inequalities in regards to ethnicity could be reproduced in regards to the backpackers, meaning they could be subjected to preferential treatment or be subjected to

[48]This is in contrast to the nearby “Parque de Café”, a coffee-themed theme park popular with domestic tourists, and a prime example of MacCannell’s (1973) staged authenticity. However, the coffee zone (or Coffee Cultural Landscape in the official documents) has been institutionally recognised as cultural heritage, and the included landscapes, architecture and small towns have been deemed authentic by the UNESCO in 2011, and therefore receiving the “cool authentication” as described by E. Cohen and S. Cohen (2012).

worse service based on which ethnic group they seemingly belong to. However, in this study only Latin Americans who looked white or mestizo participated and could be observed travelling. Further studying this phenomenon, if Latin American backpackers have similar experiences travelling in different countries in Latin America, or being from different ethnic backgrounds, would therefore be rewarding and could shed more light on underlying power relations based on “looking local” and being possibly involved into local conflicts due to their ethnic background. In a previous study in Taganga there were indicators that black minorities from other parts of Colombia were discriminated against by locals (Thieme 2012); a treatment that black travellers could then be subjected to as well.

Another outcome of the study was that the culture of the host community could also hinder some more interaction of the backpackers with the local host community. This was especially true in Taganga with regard to female travellers. Their experience was in some cases influenced by the male-dominated cultural values of the Caribbean coast, and they even tried to avoid social interaction as it would for the female travellers, if out in the village without a male companion, could consist of unwanted sexual advances. This might then influence the economic decision making of the guests in the community in regards to going out, or might also influence their length of stay as travellers might not want to stay in a place that they are subjected to unwanted social interaction. In this case, the cultural also influences the social embeddedness.

The reasons for the lack of interaction of the backpackers with the locals, apart from the business transactions, seem to be varied therefore. The cultural differences, the feeling of being seen as only a way to generate business, along with language barriers for the non-Spanish-speaking backpackers could have been reasons explaining the backpackers mostly socialising within themselves in their hostels, less with locals. An exception concerning the interaction with the locals were the artesanos in Taganga, who socialised more with the locals as they were themselves more or less part of the community of the village. They were seen favourably by the locals, as part of their village. In Salento, however, where there were few of them, they were seen unfavourably by the local government, but the interviewed local business owners did not even mention them, and might therefore be mostly impartial to their presence in the local community. Broocks and Hannam (2016) emphasised that in their study the artesanos were usually deeply involved in the local culture, often even in the indigenous cultures. This could only be observed for

Taganga in this study however. The differing approach to the artesanos by the two research locations could be explained by their exposure to the artesano travellers. While Taganga has a history of attracting these kinds of travellers, Salento has not. This, along with Salento's local government's negative view on them might have led to an apprehension of accepting them into their community, and therefore limiting somewhat the contact between artesanos and locals.

The closer integration into the local community by the artesanos might give them an advantage over their backpacking counterparts regarding from benefits of being seen as part of the community. These could in especially be true in regards to the differential pricing. The artesanos might have benefited from more favourable pricing at informal businesses such as street food vendors as they are more seen as part of the local community, and also as more budget-conscious travellers. They therefore might have a better bargaining power than other Latin American or non-Latin American backpackers, as they either might be offered lower prices or can try to demand them by pointing out their situation as artesanos.

Furthermore, the artesanos gap the bridge between being locals and travellers, as they are somewhat both (Broocks and Hannam, 2016), they are consumers and producers of tourism at the same time. Being also producers is their response to the lack in financial capital that other backpackers might possess due to their nationality or the income group they belong to. This lack of financial capital would limit their access to travel and mobility. They have found the solution for that by travelling mostly within the same region, i.e. Latin America, and financing their travels through petty trade such as jewellery making and sales, food sales or music making. The artesanos could therefore be part of the group that Uriely (2001) describes as non-institutionalised working tourists, who might be working during their travels out of economic necessity in order to be able to participate in tourism. This can be seen as their way to address the global inequalities concerning access to travel. As Britton (1982) had already discussed in his classic paper, tourism might uphold regional and global inequalities, as it could be argued that it is also expressed through the possibility to participate in tourism as consumers (Fergusson, 2011). The access to travel could be argued as demonstrating uneven power relationship in regards to finances and therefore access to travel between the mostly non-Latin American backpackers that can

travel for a prolonged period of time without having to work along the way[49] and between the Latin American artesanos who are in need of an income source in order to travel at all. Additionally, this uneven access to travel could reinforce the link to the political embeddedness. This is then further explained later in this chapter.

However, the trading that the artesanos engage in seems to be usually done without an official permit and while on a tourist visa (if from outside Colombia). This might help explain why the local government in Salento is not too keen on them doing business in their town, as they might take business away from the local businesses. This also hinders their integration into the local community, contrary to Taganga. How far the local government can exert power over the integration of the artesanos into the local community could be further explored. It can be assumed that the local police could check them for work permits and other documents, and therefore somewhat create a friendly or rather hostile environment for the *artesanos* to trade in, depending on the government's stance. The local business communities, however, did not seem to mind the trading travellers in either location. How the local business communities work together is discussed further in the following section.

7.2.4 The social embeddedness between the local businesses

Similarly to the backpacker grouping, the findings on the SMEs showed that they are not a homogenous group. There turned out to be differences within the SMEs, specifically regarding their ownership structures, such as locally-run businesses, foreign-run businesses or jointly-run between Colombians and foreigners. These differences seemed to have an important influenced on all three levels of embeddedness.

The businesses within the two communities were working together based on three different models: on a commission basis, based on kin or friendship, and based on a social approach. The businesses working together on a commission basis were often not much involved socially with the other business owners that they were recommending. They

[49] As explained in the previous chapter, the length of the trip differed significantly between the non-Latin American and Latin American backpackers. The maximum trip length of Latin American backpackers who did not work was 3 months, while several European backpackers who did not work while travelling travelled for over a year.

mostly worked together for financial advantage. This could suggest that some businesses in the communities might exert more power in regards to how much they can pay other businesses in commissions for their recommendations. Businesses could outplay each other by offering more commissions than others, or demanding a higher percentage of commission for their recommendation than a competitor. The power might hereby lie with financially stronger businesses that are able to pay more commission than financially less successful businesses or businesses that are just starting out. This, in turn, could again be a reproduction of already existing social inequalities in the communities, as the payment of higher commissions might benefit already successful businesses and therefore financially well off or stable business owners, whereas it might disadvantage businesses with already low financial capital.

The findings of this study show that many tourism businesses work together with their kin and friends who also run or work with businesses within the community. Recommendations based on family connections seemed to be generally common in a tourism setting, especially in small communities[50]. This might give businesses with family connections to other tourism businesses in the community more social power than businesses lacking those family ties, such as the businesses that are set up by outsiders of the communities and by foreigners.

However, the study showed that especially the foreign business owners seemed to address this lack in immediate connections by forming relatively close friendship groups or cliques with other foreign business owners. This might outbalance the possible disadvantage of not having any long-standing family ties within the community. On the contrary, these friendship groups could even become more powerful than the locals. As discussed in more in depth in the following section of the chapter, the foreign business owners often possessed more human capital due to their travel experience, which the Colombian owners often lacked. The travel experience provided them with insider knowledge of the (backpacker) tourism market. Therefore they are closer to their customers and can assess their needs and preferences better than the business owners without the travel experiences. This is consistent with the findings of Hampton's (2003) study on Yogyakarta in Indonesia, where the business owners with previous tourism or

[50]However, these recommendations based on kinship or friendships in backpacker tourism seemed to be understudied in academia, as so far no study could be found to compare the findings to.

hospitality experience tended to be more successful. Additionally, in their study on small tourism businesses in Spain, Hernandez-Maestro *et al.* (2009) stress the importance of knowledge as it provided a competitive advantage to the businesses, especially in regards to the objective quality of the businesses. However, they also found that it did not necessarily have an influence on the perceived quality by the guests (Hernandez-Maestro *et al.* 2009). As this study did not assess the backpacker's perception of the interviewed tourism businesses and their service expectations, this could therefore be an interesting area for further research in the backpacker tourism sector if the travel experience and knowledge actually have an influence.

Nevertheless, by creating those friendship groups these backpacker tourism specific skills and the market knowledge acquired through being able to travel themselves, the foreign business owners might keep that social capital within their group. The knowledge and skills were therefore not shared with locals who did not have the chance to travel themselves. The knowledge power could therefore lie and stay within the foreigners, which could again be seen as the reproduction of general global inequalities in regards to access to travel, and the acquisition of necessary skills to run a successful tourism business. This could also lead to resentment by the locals and create tension in the communities as further explained in the next section. However, many of the foreign business owners tried to share their knowledge with their local staff, such as through teaching them English, but with varying interest by their local employees.

For the Colombian business owners without travel experience, some of them gained some of the knowledge through the so-called 'absorptive capacity' as known from FDI literature (see for example Kinoshita and Lu 2006; Marcin 2008; Zhang *et al.* 2010). This means that through the tourism businesses run by the foreigners and as well as through their guests the local businesses might be able to acquire some of the skills that the foreign business owners possess due to their travel experience. As both research locations had been exposed to tourism beforehand, it is likely that the local business owners developed some skills and acquired some knowledge through this experience. Taganga had more experience with foreign tourists already, as they have been guests to the community since the 1970s, and with neighbouring Santa Marta also having been a popular domestic tourism resort since the 1970s (Belisle and Hoy, 1980). The locals there might have therefore been able to acquire some knowledge in this area, even though the foreign

business owners initiated and still seemed to dominate the backpacker tourism market in the community. Salento on the other hand has not been exposed to foreign tourism much until recently, due to the guerrilla activity in the region until the early 2000s. The locals were more involved in domestic tourism as this sector had been developed since the area became safe to visit again, and with international backpacker tourism only being initiated around 2004. The locals might therefore possess more knowledge in the domestic tourism sector, and many were more involved in that than in international backpacker tourism. But some locals also acquired more travel knowledge through their backpacker customers or by copying (learning from?!) foreign business owners, and would therefore have used their absorptive capacity for acquiring new knowledge and skills and applying them to their business. This would support the findings of Hampton (2013, 1998) where fishing families in Indonesia were able to acquire and absorb the knowledge from the backpackers while running backpacker tourism businesses such as beach hut accommodation.

Apart from the access to travel knowledge, often the foreign and Colombian business owners were set apart by their approach to their business. A lot of the foreign business owners, and also some of the Colombian business owners, in both communities could be described as ‘lifestyle entrepreneurs’ as defined by Brenner and Fricke (2016) for their study on backpacker tourism business owner in Mexico, whose objective is not necessarily profit, but more the sharing of the backpacking lifestyle with their customers. Additionally, the entrepreneurs in this study did not seem to want to get rich from their backpacker tourism business, but rather to share and spread wealth throughout the community through recommendations and local employment. This generosity might be explained through the advantageous position of some of these business owners having additional income sources in their home countries and therefore not being dependent on the profit of their tourism business. For others, the lower costs of living in Colombia also meant they could earn less while achieving a similar lifestyle to their home countries. Since these foreign business owners possessed more financial power from other business ventures or previous employments, it gave them an advantage over the local business owners who were not in such a favourable position, but depended on the income that their tourism business generated. This put the businesses that depend on the tourism income in a more precarious situation during low season or times of less demand as experienced in Taganga, where the number of tourist was perceived by the business owners to be declining since 2013. The foreign lifestyle entrepreneurs could out-balance these

fluctuations through their other incomes, or would just be able to move on or back to their home countries.

However, as mentioned above, the lifestyle entrepreneurs seemed to put more emphasis on sharing the tourism income within the community, adopting a more social approach to working with other business owners within the community. They usually only offered one or two tourism services so their customers would use other businesses for the additional services they desired; for example they would only offer accommodation without breakfast or dinner in order for their guests to eat at the local restaurants. They would not gain anything such as commission or return business from their recommendation. Rather, they would recommend other businesses based on their own liking, for example of the food, or because they want to spread the income generated by tourism throughout the community. Both local and foreign business owners engaged in this kind of recommendation system in both research locations.

Other foreign and Colombian business owners, however, seemed to have a clear profit maximisation target for their business, wanting to profit as much as possible from the backpacker expenditures themselves. They tried to provide as many services as possible to the travellers, including accommodation, food, drinks and tours, similar to a conventional tourism resort. This also might support the idea of backpacker hostel as safe havens as mentioned earlier, as the backpackers do not need to leave the compound of the hostel as all their needs are catered for. It could not be established, however, if in this case the demand influenced the offer of this full service, or if the full service was offered by the businesses first and the backpackers accepted the offers. The findings suggest, however, that both kinds of businesses, either run by lifestyle entrepreneurs offering a limited service or the full service traveller hostels, seemed equally popular with the backpackers.

This division between the two ways of conducting the tourism business suggests two results. Firstly, there could be either different groups of backpackers that prefer a certain style of service - full service versus utilising various service providers – or that the travellers only look for full service safe havens in some destinations to get a break from organising all aspects of their trip, while they are happy to do so in other destinations. This might be related to the length and the stage of their trip or the actual destination itself, for example in regards to the cultural distance between hosts and guests, and could be

explored in further studies to predict the demand for full service backpacker businesses. Secondly, the profit-driven full service provision also means that less tourism income is spread throughout the community as the businesses do not necessarily work together to create a tourism product for the backpackers involving more than one or two businesses. This could then lead to tension in the community as some of the entrepreneurs might be perceived as being selfish for not sharing the tourism income throughout the community.

As Zukin and DiMaggio (1990:20) pointed out these social relations are important as they can "facilitate collective action both within and outside of the market contexts." This can be the case, for example, in collective social and political action as practiced by the round table in Salento. However, one needs to be cautious of the power structures underlying this action, as certain individuals or groups that are already socially dominant in the community could be controlling these actions. This could then, in turn, only reinforce already existing inequalities within the community instead of diminishing them. When trying to analyse the round table in Salento, it was clear that the foreign business owners chose not to participate at all, possibly because they did not see any value in the discussion forum. Their reasoning was that there was actually not enough action generated by the weekly meetings. Furthermore, the talks and actions did not distinguish between domestic and international tourism, an approach that was also reflected in the local government's approach to tourism as explained in a later section, but they might require differing actions and policies[51].

Their detachment of not wanting to get involved in the local collective action could also originate from the fact that they might not be as invested in the local community as the locals and Colombians, as they might only be temporary members of the community with the opportunity or plan to go back to their home countries or another destination once they either do not generate sufficient profit anymore or they just felt like moving on. The locals, however, might be more inclined to invest their time into collective action as the community is their permanent home with limited options to move on. Hence, the tension between the foreign and Colombian business owners could be intensified by this sentiment of 'opting out'. As the locals might not have that option, this could lead to resentment towards the foreign business owners as expressed by some of the local entrepreneurs in Salento.

[51] Since domestic and backpacker tourists seemed to prefer different kinds of accommodation and activities, their requirements differed, such as the parking situation for private vehicles and tour busses in Salento and surroundings. Therefore policies should distinguish between the two groups of tourists.

Adding to this might also cultural differences, which are explained in the following section on cultural embeddedness.

7.3 Cultural Embeddedness

7.3.1 Introduction

Cultural embeddedness was defined by Mosedale (2011) as how the values and understandings of a community influence the economic decisions and therefore the institutions of the market place. This understanding would ensure a stable economic environment, but can be challenged when the economic activities involve the crossing of national and cultural borders as it is happening in tourism (Mosedale, 2011). This section therefore discusses the notion of a backpacker culture and its implication for the production and consumption of backpacker tourism in both studied communities. After that, the tensions between the local and foreign business owners are considered in the context of possible cultural differences.

7.3.2 (No such thing as a) Backpacker culture?

To dissect the values of the backpackers, it is necessary to divide them into sub-groups that share similar preferences. In both research locations, three different kinds of backpackers were identified: the conventional backpackers travelling on a budget for a prolonged period of time, the flashpackers travelling for a shorter period of time[52] and with a higher budget, and the artesanos who are predominantly Latin American backpackers that sell mostly handicrafts for a life of travelling and have been only studied in depth for the first time by Broocks and Hannam (2016).

Generally, the non-Latin American backpackers tend to travel for longer on average than the Latin American backpackers. While longest trips of several Western backpackers were over 12 months, the longest trip of a Latin American traveller was 3 months in this study. This does, however, not include the artesanos, who often travel for a prolonged period of time or even life, as discussed earlier and also supported by the findings by Brooks and Hannam (2016). Interestingly, there are travellers that fall into the definition of flashpackers

[52] This refers to the length of the trip as defined in the introduction of this thesis.

as described in the introduction of this thesis and supported by Hannam and Diekmann (2010) and Paris (2010; 2012) both Latin American and non-Latin American. However, the Latin Americans would often primarily go for beach holidays if travelling for a short period of time, concentrating on Caribbean coast, whereas the non-Latin American backpackers were travelling across the whole country even if they were on a shorter holiday of just a few weeks. The tendency to shorter backpacker-style trips was already observed by Cave *et al.* (2008) in both Scotland and New Zealand, and could be seen as an evolving travel style complementing traditional backpacker tourism, possibly due to work commitments of the generally older backpackers who were mostly professionals. Furthermore, the different geographical preferences of Latin American backpackers and non-Latin American backpackers for their short trip could be explained by the geographical proximity of Colombia to other Latin American countries. A second visit to Colombia from travellers of the same region seems more likely than from backpackers visiting from other parts of the world. The Latin Americans might therefore not feel as pressured to see the whole country during their trip, while the non-Latin American travellers might fear they will never come back and therefore want to see as much of the country as possible. Nevertheless, the different geographical preferences could have policy and tourism planning implications, such as the provision of direct flights from Argentina or Chile to the Caribbean coast instead of going via Bogota.

For the longer trips, i.e. over one month, all interviewed travellers visited different destinations throughout the country (see Figure 6 in chapter 5). Most backpackers kept to relatively established destinations within Colombia, what Richards and Wilson (2004b) call cyclical movements of backpackers along well-trodden routes between backpacker enclaves. Although it might be debatable if all of the popular destinations in Colombia are enclaves, the travelling along an almost pre-defined route can be observed, that has been described as “Gringo Trail”, comparable to South East Asia’s “Banana Pancake Trail” (Hampton 2013). There does not seem to be a definition of the actual “Gringo Trail”, but rather slightly different routes described by travel bloggers or websites, ranging from a cluster of mostly destinations in Central America (Oge 2013) to fully drawn routes throughout all of Latin America (Indietraveller 2014b). Nevertheless, Hampton and Hamzah (2016) found that these backpacker trails are ever developing due to travel innovations such as transport options and due to external shocks such as security issues or other emerging destinations. A mapping of the current trail can therefore only be seen

as a temporary snapshot.

Furthermore, this present study indicated that the backpackers travelling in Colombia are generally older, meaning over 25 years old, and professionals, less young students like the ones travelling in South East Asia as observed by Sørensen (2003) or E. Cohen (1982; 2004). This might be related to the travel costs, or it might be due to the recent history of Colombia and its security perception. A flight to Colombia or South America from Europe in general can cost about twice as much as a flight to Thailand. Since it can be assumed that students generally possess a lower income, they might rather chose a destination that is cheaper to travel to and also cheaper to travel in. For the professionals, however, as most were in this study, the trip to and around Colombia seemed affordable. This might also have implications for the services provided by the backpacker tourism businesses, in as that older backpackers with a solid financial background might be expecting a higher quality of services, and that they might be able to spend more money on certain services and activities.

Linked to this, most of the interviewed travellers were also experienced backpackers, having travelled in other parts of the world previously. This shows that Colombia does not seem to be a “first time backpacking” destination, but rather for more seasoned travellers with experience. A possible explanation might be that first time travellers prefer a destination with an already well established backpacker tourism infrastructure, like Thailand, that has many decades of backpacker tourism experience (Hampton 2013). These findings are similar to what Paris and Teye (2010) describe in their study on backpacker travel careers, in which they found that previous travel experience played a main role in travel motivations, especially in regards to independent travel away from backpacker enclaves. As Colombia and the research locations are not as developed (yet) as the famous backpacker enclaves in South East Asia and Australia, they might provide them with a newer, less formally organised destination.

That said, it seems though that the travellers are becoming less spontaneous in regards to travel planning, which used to be a major characteristic of backpacker travel, especially by the “early drifter” types of travellers (E. Cohen 1973). Most respondents had their accommodation pre-booked before arriving at one of the destinations, often through booking platforms as discussed in section 2.3 of this chapter. For the Argentinian

backpackers it had practical reasons to be able to pre-pay due to their home country's economic situation. Generally, though, there seems to be a greater need of security and planning for the backpackers, as can be seen by travelling along established routes as mentioned above and by the pre-planning and booking of accommodation through websites. E. Cohen (2004) had observed this before, stating that backpackers and regular tourists become more and more alike in regards to travel style, a sentiment that has since been echoed by Moscardo (2006) and Wilson and Richards (2008).

This assimilation towards regular tourists could also be seen in the choice of accommodation of the backpackers and especially flashpackers, who often preferred to stay in private rooms rather than shared dormitories, and further in the requirement of services such as more upscale food options. This implies quite a drastic change to the traditional backpacker travel style, something that Cave *et al.* (2008) had already observed in the more mature backpacker destination of New Zealand. It could therefore indicate that either Colombia is slowly maturing as a traveller destination, or that the whole backpacker tourism market is maturing independently of the destination. The implications of this shift in demand had implications for the backpacker businesses in the research locations in so far as, for examples, hostels converted dormitory rooms into private rooms, and the emergence of a more refined local restaurant scene. This could also have implications of the further development of the destinations. However, not only the backpacker 'culture' has effects on the production and consumption of tourism, but also the cultural backgrounds of the participants in backpacker tourism. How these might shape the tourism production and consumption is discussed in the following section.

7.3.3 Local and global tourism culture (clash)

In both studied communities backpacker tourism was initiated by foreigners opening the first hostel. In both places, Colombians from other parts of the country and locals from the community then subsequently set up similar businesses when the original ones became successful. This process, the initiation by outsiders and following copying of business ideas in backpacker tourism had already been observed in other parts of the world, for example in Indonesia by Hampton (2003; 1998). This can be explained by the differing skill set that the foreign business owners possessed in comparison to most Colombian business owners. Namely, these are the access to and quality of education, their acquired

travel experience, and their financial means. In other words, mostly the foreigners possessed the knowledge power of backpacker tourism as they had the chance to travel as backpackers themselves before. Only very few of the interviewed Colombian entrepreneurs were able to do that as artesanos. This gives the travel-knowledgeable foreigners an advantage over the less travelled locals, as during the course of travelling one picks up on travel knowledge that can then be translated into tourism services tailored to the needs of the backpackers. With the lack of this travel experience, it might be harder for the locals to provide the services and standards that international backpackers expect from a tourism business. That said, some business-savvy locals that often had a good degree of education were able to then acquire the travel knowledge by observing and copying successful backpacker tourism businesses and also through communicating with their guests, as mentioned earlier about absorptive capacity. Other were less successful with their attempts at imitating the business success of local or foreign business owners, which could be explained by their lack in general education, business skills or with saturation in the market if they entered too late.

As mentioned earlier, many of the foreign business owners also possessed other additional income sources, or had savings from working in their home countries. This often gave them stronger financial power in comparison to the locals who had often been working in agriculture and did therefore not possess enough finances needed for the initial investment. However, some of the locals in both communities who were better educated had successful careers outside of tourism and were able to invest into a tourism business with the financial capital earned through their career. In both communities, it seems that the most successful backpacker tourism businesses[53] were run by foreigners and by Colombians with a good educational background such as university education. Others, often with less financial and human capital in regards to education and skills acquired by travel experience, were somewhat excluded from successfully running tourism businesses. This does not mean that they were necessarily unsuccessful, but they usually ran much smaller businesses, for example with fewer beds and without additional employees[54]. It

[53] The success was subjectively measured by the researcher based on the amount of hostel beds and their observed occupancy, the popularity of the business on rating websites such as TripAdvisor and Hostelworld, as well as the evidence provided in the interviews with the business owners about their own success and the success of other businesses they referred to.

[54] However, it would need to be considered if additional beds or tables would mean that they wold also need to hire additional staff other than their family, which might then have an influence on the profit margin of the

could be assumed that the larger and more successful businesses possess more financial power, and might therefore acquire more social power within the community over time[55]. The less successful and smaller, often locally owned operations might be lacking this power. It is therefore possible that the structure of the backpacker tourism businesses somewhat mirror the power distribution in regards to financial and social capital within the communities and also on a global scale, which could lead to tensions within the communities.

Adding to this, the tensions could have been further fuelled by the differing 'work cultures' of the locals and the foreign business owners who relied on the local work force for their businesses, as has been mentioned especially in Taganga. The more relaxed work attitude of the people on the Caribbean coast did not always fare well with the business owners from other parts of Colombia or from abroad. Even though the backpacker tourism businesses provided the locals with an alternative employment to agriculture (or with any employment at all), meaning it provided them with an income, one might initially think the business owners should possess some power over their local employees as they relied on the income from working at a tourism business. However, since there was a lack of skilled tourism labour in the community, especially in Taganga, sometimes the foreign businesses had no other choice than accepting the differing attitudes to work, therefore also giving the employees some power back. However, often the foreign business owners would attempt to train the employees in a more European or North American way of working, but this was observed to have varying success. Furthermore, in Taganga some of the business owners eventually resorted to hiring employees from nearby Santa Marta who apparently possessed a better education and work attitude than some of the locals according to the business owners. With this alternative in hand, this put the business owners back into a more powerful position over locals who had far less human and (mostly) less financial capital.

This might also be due to the traditional income generators in both communities, which were heavily reliant on agriculture in Salento and fishing in Taganga, and therefore

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business due to labour costs.

[55] Even though foreign business owners in Salento were sometimes not seen as favourable by some of the local population, it could be argued that they still accumulated a certain amount of social power within the community due to the provision of employment to locals and the financial prowess of their business. The social power, however, was not reflected in the political power within the community.

required different skills from the people working in it. In both communities though, these traditions seem still to be a source of pride and key part of the local identity. While tourism might be taking over as the main income provider in both communities, it might also help to preserve this part of the local culture. In Salento, tourism seems to complement traditional agriculture at the moment, with tourism enabling coffee growers to have an additional source of income in the form of tours or even accommodation on their farms, as well as the provision of horse riding by other farmers. In Taganga, however, tourism seems to be replacing the traditional fishery, but the locals can use the skills of fishermen for some other tourism related jobs such as dive boat captains or providing boat transport to the nearby beaches. This preservation and some alteration of traditional culture has been studied at various times in the tourism literature, for example by Cole (2007) who observed that for the rural inhabitants of Indonesia performing their culture for tourists gave them a sense of pride instead of bemoaning the loss of their traditional way of working. In the case of her study, this commodification of culture led to an empowerment of the locals which they then also used to assert more political power (Cole 2007). This could, however, not be observed for this study. None of the interviewed successful backpacker tourism business owners was much involved in local or regional politics[56], or seemed to be even much invested into local traditions. This might be due to the amount of outsiders from the community running the backpacker tourism businesses, while the locals often ran smaller operations or, in Salento, were more active in domestic tourism.

Additionally, some locals were not running formal businesses, thereby somewhat hindering their growth and therefore power within the local business community. Whereas mostly hostel owners were complaining about illegally run accommodation providers as unfair competition, in general Colombians seemed to accept informal businesses such as street vendors to a certain extent as a way of making a livelihood, as long as they did not interfere with their legal businesses as in the case of the hostels. As an example, the business activities of the artesanos and food sellers on the beach in Taganga seemed to be accepted amongst the local business people, and their use of public spaces for their business activity also seems to be established within the community.

On the contrary, informal business activities could even be seen as an alternative to the

[56] Apart from only two Colombian backpacker tourism business owners in Salento being active in the round table.

dominant economic structures (Duignan 2016). As mentioned earlier, many of the successful backpacker tourism businesses were owned and run by people who tended to be more highly educated and possess financial capital. They could therefore be seen as privileged in regards to their human and financial capital. Others, however, might lack these, and therefore also economic power. This then often also translates into a lack of political power within their community, thereby enforcing existing power structures. However, as backpacker tourism is argued to have low entrance barriers and be beneficial to local communities in general, not only the elites (Hampton 1998; Scheyvens 2002), the benefits of tourism development are supposed to be distributed more widely through the communities to all actors, including the less privileged, which could be achieved through these informal businesses. Duignan's (2016) study on informal tourism and hospitality businesses during the Rio Olympics in 2016 supports this sentiment. The illegal sale of food and drinks on the streets around the sports locations by residents of the favelas enabled them to also financially benefit from the high influx of Olympic tourists, from which they would have otherwise been excluded. The informal businesses might therefore provide a possible 'democratisation' of tourism, as it allows capital to flourish to groups or individuals who would otherwise be excluded from tourism development due to their lack of financial, human and social capital. It might well be that it suits these illegal businesses to stay small and not expand further, which could possibly mean to become registered, which could then influence their profit margin. So staying small and "under the radar" of the government might be their strategy. Furthermore, there also seemed to be a lack of prosecution of these informal businesses by the government, allowing them to establish themselves. How the government is further involved, or not involved, will now be discussed in the following section.

7.4 Political Embeddedness

This section explores the political embeddedness of backpacker tourism on a local, regional and national level. Mosedale (2011: 97) defined political embeddedness as the interrelationship between economic and political actors and how these actors shape each other. These include how regulations shape the structure of the market, but take historical context and asymmetries into account (Mosedale, 2011: 98), and in this study, apply them to link the consumption and production of tourism.

In the case of Colombia, security and political stability have been major issues in the past decades. Coming out of a long civil war makes the political situation different to other tourism destinations in Latin America. The perceived political stability is a major factor in attracting tourists to visit the country (Lepp and Gibson 2003), even Elsrud (2001) argued that backpackers are attracted to locations that are somewhat associated with risk to construct their own identity and narrative around this risk. However, with the signing of the peace accord between the Colombian government and the biggest guerrilla group FARC on December 1st 2016 (Colombian Congress ratifies new Farc peace accord 2016), the risk to travel to Colombia might be perceived as even lower now, and could be compared to travelling to other Latin American countries. This might lead to an even bigger growth in tourism in Colombia in general, but could also make Colombia less attractive to backpackers if they belong to the group that Elsrud (2001) described as the ones constructing their backpacker narrative on the basis of risk and adventure. Nevertheless, even though the Colombian government has therefore set the frame for possibly more tourism development, they are not much involved in tourism development on a regional or local level, and even less in backpacker tourism in general, as will be further discussed in the following.

As mentioned in the previous section, illegal businesses are hardly ever prosecuted by the government. According to Speed and Harrison's (2004) study on backpacker tourism in Scotland, if there is a slow official recognition of the backpacker tourism markets by the government, possibly resulting informal market would then be hard to subsequently formalise. Hence the government at either level should have an interest in formalising illegal backpacker tourism businesses as early as possible. An example of this would be Australia[57], where entrepreneurs and policy makers had taken on backpacker tourism quickly, managing to generate income from earning tax from the businesses, making backpacker tourism a success for the businesses and the government (Cooper, O'Mahoney and Erfurt 2004; Slaughter 2004). Possibly, the Australian government saw the potential and economic contribution of backpacker tourism to the national tourism economy, and was therefore interested in formalising it quickly, for example also by providing the working holiday visa option for long-term budget travellers who wanted to finance their travels through occasional work. In Colombia, however, the government might

[57] Australia has a long history of Australians travelling, e.g. in the 1960s and 1970s travelling overland to Europe to work there (Hampton 2013).

have been focussing more on mass tourism development, paying less attention to other forms of tourism. The lacking engagement with alternative form of tourism to mass tourism might possibly because tourism did not develop in stages as in other destinations. Another reason could be that the policy makers themselves also lack the experience of travelling like backpackers and therefore are less interested in this form of tourism development.

Even though other countries had already shown the successful development of backpacker tourism, the reality was a different one for backpacker tourism planning and development in the two communities, as there seemed to be little involvement of the local, regional and national government. Given the lack of qualitative data because of very few interviews with policy makers, especially in Taganga, could also be seen as an indicator of the lack of interests of the government to get involved. Therefore drawing on another study, Scheyvens (2002: 158) argues that ideally, the government should be involved "at the earliest stage possible, [as] communities need accurate information about both the benefits and pitfalls of backpacker tourism" to be able to decide if they want to develop it further or not. The government should provide appropriate structures for the involvement of the communities in tourism development, such as committees, round tables and a tourism board, which was partially self-initiated in Salento and then supported by the local and regional government. It also needs to be noted that the communities are not heterogeneous, so the power might stay with dominant groups in those structures that could in this case be the ones that possess the social and financial capital as mentioned earlier.

The early government involvement in backpacker tourism and its setting up of structures is, however, somewhat unrealistic in many countries, especially in LDCs. In the case of the two study locations, there was no mention of backpacker tourism in neither of their tourism development plans. In Salento, the plan was just generally addressing tourism, both domestic and the international backpackers, which might be too unspecific. In Taganga the local government was not involved at all and there also seemed no particular interest in backpacker tourism, as might also be indicated that the researcher was not able to secure an interview with a local government representative for this study.

Most national governments are not interested in backpacker tourism, apart from the aforementioned Australia, and from Malaysia and South Africa, as they prefer the

seemingly higher-spending mass and luxury tourists (Hampton 2013). This can also be seen by the tourism promotion of the Colombian government, which focussed on the general promotion of the country as a destination, but primarily on mass and cruise tourism (ProColombia, 2016). Instead of being supported by the government as an additional tourism sector, backpacker tourism development seems to be low key and evolve from the bottom up, and largely remains outside of official tourism planning. This therefore means that the government is largely absent as a key stakeholder in tourism development.

This power vacuum left by the government might then give shadow industries the room to get involved, and possibly become more powerful as Duffy (2000; 2002) had observed in Belize. This might be especially true in the case of Taganga, where various shadow groups from robbers, drug dealers to possibly paramilitary are trying to benefit and potentially control the local tourism development. Once this power vacuum is filled by these shadow industries, the question remains if they would give up this power again once the government decides to intervene. This could lead to power struggles in the government's own area of responsibility, and it is questionable if that would be beneficial for the local tourism development.

Moreover, the general lack of planning for backpacker tourism on all levels contributes also to the local government's partial failure to provide its citizens with the appropriate cultural and human capital, especially in regards to education and skills training, to enable them to participate in backpacker tourism. Instead, the business owners have to provide, for example educational measures such as English classes to their employees. These private measures are only put in place, if the entrepreneur is willing to invest into local employees. Otherwise they seem to employ people with the desired skills from outside of the communities. The government therefore seems to rely more on private measures. Bramwell (2011: 462) points out that "without government interventions … tourism might be reliant on voluntary actions or self-regulation", but Williams and Montanari (1999) argued that this would not be sufficient. Instead, it could lead to chaos and power struggles between different local groups and the shadow industries, as argued earlier.

Adding further to the lack of involvement is the conflict of interests between different levels of the government, as exampled by the case of Salento, where the local government tried

to promote and somewhat protect the nearby Cocora Valley as a tourist asset, while the national government seemed to have awarded mining rights in the same area. This conflict of interests could lead to ambiguous policy making and therefore possible resentment of the communities to work with government once they decide to get involved with the planning. Mowforth and Munt (2008) and Williams (2013) argued that there would always be competing interests between different levels of governments, as Bramwell (2011: 470) explained: “The state [sic] also operates at one or more geographical or spatial scales, which may be transnational, national, regional or local, and the state’s functions and activities often differ between these different spatial scales.” These scales, however, might be adjusted over the national, regional or local space, and over time. Nevertheless, at the end of the day the national government seems to possess the most power amongst those spatial scales, and might therefore be able to overrule local and regional policies, both directly referring to backpacker tourism development[58] and also on other laws and policies that might indirectly affect tourism, such as the possible mining activities mentioned earlier.

7.5 Summary

In conclusion, this discussion showed the complex relationships between the different actors of backpacker tourism development, how they are socially, culturally and politically embedded, and what impact their embeddedness has on the tourism development in the two communities.

From a social and social point of view, the backpackers seem to be winners in the current backpacker tourism development in regards to their access to information, which has expanded due to the internet and its blogs and rating websites, and has placed the power of travel knowledge firmly in their hands. This, in turn, has made traditional travel guide books such as the *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* series lose out. Some tourism businesses could also lose due to the increased pressure on them to maintain a perfect score on the rating websites, which could be hard to achieve.

Concerning the differences between Latin American and non-Latin American backpackers, there were surprisingly few, except for a tendency for different geographical preferences.

[58] For example, in Malaysia the central government (national government) had a backpacker tourism strategy and passed that one down to the regional governments of the states of Malaysia (Hampton 2013).

The Latin American backpackers might have a slight advantage when bargaining for prices, which might be due to their appearance as locals, and because of their better command of the local language in comparison to most non-Latin American backpackers. An exception in this study were the artesanos, who were somewhat more removed from the backpacker tourism and more integrated into the local community, especially in Taganga.

Even though backpacker tourism enables locals with less financial and human resources to participate in tourism by running their own business or being employed by one, those who gain most nevertheless seem to be the ones who possessed most financial, human and possibly social capital before getting involved into tourism. These can be foreign entrepreneurs or usually better-educated Colombians who seized the opportunities that backpacker tourism development provided them with. Mostly, backpacker tourism seemed to contribute little to diminish local and global inequalities, but rather reinforced some of them. This seemed to be partially further reinforced by cultural differences. But backpacker tourism also provided the communities to preserve part of their cultures, if somewhat commodified for tourism consumption. This does not seem to be seen as negative by the locals though.

Lastly, the local communities and backpacker tourism seemed to be on the losing end of the political involvement, especially on a national level, but in the case of Taganga also on a local level. The shadow industries then seized the opportunities that this lack of involvement of the government in Taganga presented them with. However, they do not seem to contribute to a positive development of the community in the eyes of the travellers, as since 2013 the numbers of backpackers in Taganga have been declining. Maybe a strong involvement of the local government elected in 2016 can provide some much needed intervention, which could turn Taganga's fate around, from decline to reinvention. In Salento, the local government's involvement has been fairly successful so far, even though in their planning they do not distinguish between domestic and international tourism yet. But the government's and some of the locals' involvement seem to have minimised the influence of shadow industries on the community so far.

Linking the findings back to the framework proposed in Chapter 3, it can be said that this study has shown the complex and interlinked relationships of tourism consumption and

production into their social, cultural and political context. The linkage between the consumption and production has been established, especially on a social and cultural scale. They both clearly influence each other and are therefore a vital aspect of the proposed framework. On both sides, the consumption and the production side, the social embeddedness of the actors, such as the social relations, seemed to be the most influential, with the cultural embeddedness being a little less important in this study. This could, however, be of equal or more importance in other destinations where there is a higher cultural distance between the different actors in tourism and the communities. The social relations had an important influence on the tensions and power structures within the communities. The political embeddedness of backpacker tourism was also relatively low in this context, could, however, be of more importance in other study locations where the government is more involved in backpacker tourism on a local, regional and national scale.

In the following and last chapter of this thesis, the implications of this study and the significance of its findings will be summarised. It will then recommend further research areas before outlining possible policy implications.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction – Aim and research questions

The conclusion chapter of this thesis first gives a brief overview of the research questions and re-iterates the aim of this thesis. It then summarises the most important findings of the study. Following this, the third section explains the contribution of this study, and is divided into the contributions to the theory and field of study, and the contribution to policy makers and practitioners. Next, the limitations of the study are explained. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

This thesis aimed to investigate the relationship between the actors of backpacker tourism production and consumption in two rural communities in Colombia, using a broad political economy approach. It focused on the three main actors of tourism development: the tourism consumers, the tourism producers, and governmental actors. The thesis analysed the actors' social, cultural and political embeddedness within their communities, and how these affected the power relations between the actors. The embeddedness therein represented the structure within which the actors operate. The main research question addressed by this study was:

1. Adopting a political economy approach, what is the nature of the relationship between tourism development and the power relations between the three main actors of backpacker tourism development, i.e. the tourism businesses, the tourists and the governmental actors?

To understand the context of the power relations between the three actors, the thesis reflected upon the following sub-questions:

a) How do the power relations between the three actors influence the backpacker tourism development? Who or what drives this development?
b) To what extent does the social embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?
c) To what extent does the cultural embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?

d) To what extent does the political embeddedness of the three main actors of backpacker tourism development influence the power relations between them?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis investigated how the three main actors of tourism development interact and how they are interlinked in the two researched communities on the three types of embeddedness.

8.2 Summary of main findings

Overall, the study strengthened the notion that rural communities were integrated into the global cycle of consumption and production through backpacker tourism development. The communities and its actor's response to this development differed, however, and led to various tensions as the results show.

In Taganga, it could be argued that the community has reached a stage of overdevelopment of tourism. There was an excess supply of accommodation for tourists, with many businesses struggling to survive the fierce competition in the destination. In Salento, international tourism was in an early development stage with room for further development, especially concerning activities provided to the travellers. Domestic tourism, on the other hand, was already well-developed and showing first signs of overdevelopment, seemingly reaching the physical and cultural carrying capacity, especially during peak times such as the town's festival week and during Easter week.

Addressing the main research question, as well as sub-question a) on the drivers of backpacker tourism development, the thesis found that pre-existing power relations between the three actors influenced the tourism development in each community. The development of tourism in these communities did not have significant influence on existing power relations. The findings of the thesis therefore suggest that tourism development mostly reinforced unequal power relations within the communities, and did not contribute in addressing them or enabling more equal relations. The power in its different forms, such as financial power and knowledge power, mostly remained with the groups that possessed these forms of power already before tourism development, for example with the well-educated local elite or the foreign business owners.

On the consumption side, the access to travel for Latin Americans differed to the Western backpackers, which was mostly expressed by the overall length of the trip. This disparity might be due to the access to finance to travel for a prolonged period of time. Since most European and North American currencies were relatively stronger thus leading to higher purchasing power than the Colombian Peso and other Latin American currencies. Therefore the non-Latin American travellers could travel for a longer period of time on their budget than the Latin American backpackers. However, the Latin American artesanos addressed this unequal access to finance for travelling by working along the way, and therefore somewhat diminishing the financial inequality. At the same time, with their work 'on the road' being mostly products and services to other travellers, they bridge the production and consumption side of tourism, as observed by Broocks and Hannam (2016).

On the production side in the communities, only in individual cases were underprivileged locals able to break through the power inequality and run successful businesses alongside other Colombians and foreigners with more financial and social capital; but overall the findings showed that backpacker tourism development does not contribute much to diminish these pre-existing power inequalities. This was a somewhat surprising finding, especially in the context of backpacker tourism, as other studies such as Hampton (1998, 2003) and Scheyvens (2002) found that small-scale tourism development enables groups with lower financial and social capital – and hence less power within the community – to participate in tourism and improve their previous situation.

In response to the last research sub-question on the influence of the political embeddedness, the locals participating in backpacker tourism, for example as business owners, seemed to be reliant on the involvement of the local government in the process of tourism development in their respective communities. Even though one of the communities, Taganga, had been a popular tourism destination for backpackers since the 1970s, the local government had been little involved in the planning of the tourism development, nor even addressing long-standing issues arising from the accelerated tourism development since the early 2000s. This led to an informal self-governance within the community where there was little co-operation between the tourism businesses. This did not help to even out the unequal social capital of the local, Colombian and foreign business owners from different social backgrounds. Conversely, the power vacuum left by the local government was taken over by shadow industries such as criminal gangs. They

exerted power over the community itself and the tourism businesses, and therefore also the tourism development of Taganga, by providing tourists with drugs, robbing them, and possibly extorting money from the tourism businesses. This growing influence of the shadow industries led to tensions within the community, and between the community and the local government. This development mirrored the findings on ‘shadow players’ as described by Duffy (2002; 2000) in Belize, where the governmental agencies were also unable to enforce regulations any more due to the power exerted over communities by the shadow industries. This then led to a ‘shadow state’ that does not have sovereign power over its territory anymore.

In Salento, on the other hand, tourism development for international tourists had only been developing since the mid-2000s due to previous security concerns. Conversely in Taganga, the local government was much more involved in the tourism development from the beginning, which not only included backpacker tourism but also the rising popularity of Salento as a domestic tourism destination. However, the local government did not distinguish between these two different forms of tourism. It was unclear why that is, but this could possibly stem from a lack of awareness of the different requirements for the two different markets of international and domestic tourists. For now, this lack in distinguishing market segments also led to some tensions within the community.

Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis show the vital importance of the local government’s involvement with the community in the development of tourism. Possibly, the level of involvement could be seen as an indicator of the long-term success of the development of a tourism destination, at least in regards to small-scale tourism. Furthermore, coming back to the research sub-questions b), c) and d) about the importance of the three different types of embeddedness, the findings show in general that the social and the political embeddedness of the tourism actors seem to strongly influence the tourism development in the two studied communities, with the cultural embeddedness playing less of a role in this study. The following section takes a closer look at the theoretical contribution to the literature and the development of the theoretical framework.

8.3 Theoretical Contribution

The key contribution of this thesis is the theoretical framework. Tourism scholars such as Tribe (2006) suggested that tourism studies would benefit from further theorisation; this call was also expressed by Hannam (2002) in order to better represent different voices in tourism development. Furthermore, Bianchi (2009) advocated more theorisation of tourism in a specific political economy context, and this thesis also addressed this proposal. This study contributed to the call for theorisation by developing a new theoretical framework using a broad political economy approach to address how power relations within different actors shape and are shaped by backpacker tourism development in (rural) host communities. It included three actors of tourism development, the producers (i.e. the tourism SMEs), the consumers (i.e. the backpackers), and the governmental actors shaping the political environment. It therefore also addressed the dichotomy of analysing either the production or the consumption side in most tourism studies as pointed out by Ateljevic (2000). This dichotomy is still apparent in many studies to this day such as by Bui *et al.* (2014) on East Asian backpackers, and by Lacher and Nepal (2010) on tourism businesses in Northern Thailand. However, as tourism production and consumption exist simultaneously in time and space, and are therefore inherently linked, it is logical that they should be studied at together to fully understand their influence on each other.

The framework of this thesis developed this idea of linkage between consumption and production while also anchoring the actors in the social, cultural and political structures they act within. It combined two existing framework into a new one (see Figure 29 and 30). The first one was a previously practically applied framework by Ferguson (2011) focussing on small-scale actors in rural communities, and also on the consumption patterns of consumers from LDCs. The framework therefore included local voices in a global tourism economy as called for by Ferguson (2011). It was applied to small-scale backpacker tourism producers in rural Colombian communities, and to backpackers from other parts of Latin America. This practical framework was then enhanced with a theoretical anchor provided by the second one by Mosedale (2011). This was a purely theoretical framework so far that examined at the embeddedness of the actors of tourism development on three different types: their social embeddedness into social structures and networks, their cultural embeddedness, and their political embeddedness on a local, regional and national level. This new framework therefore has provided one answer to the call for more

theorisation, both in tourism studies and also in PE.

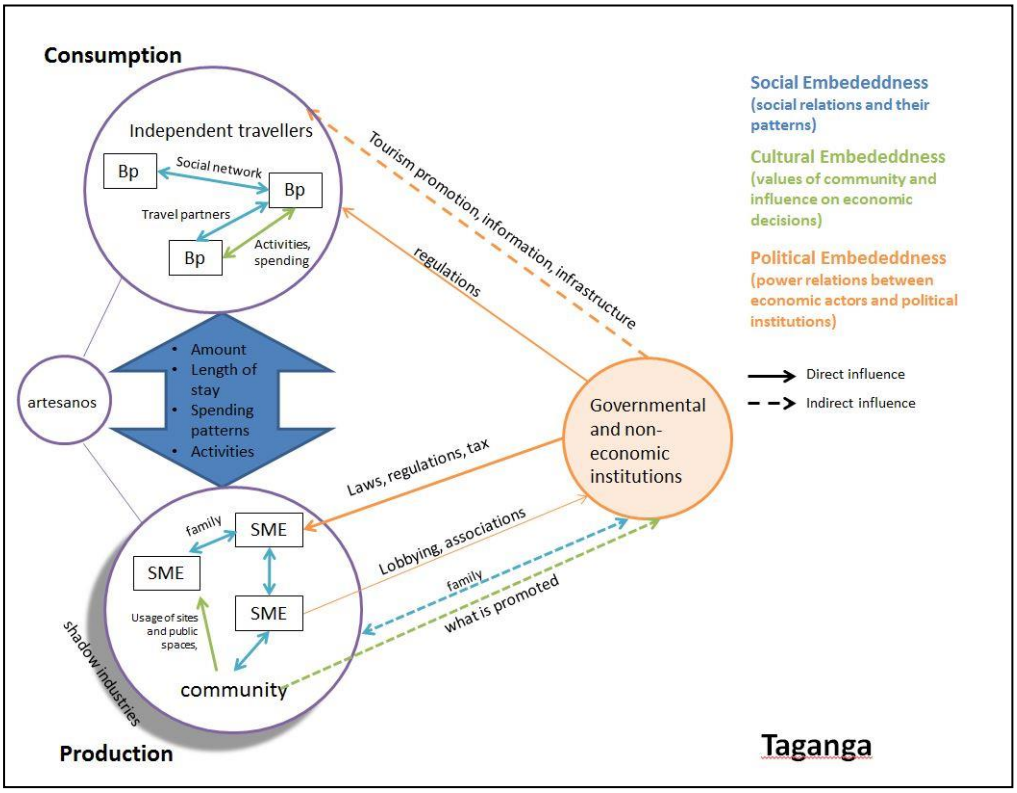

Figure 29: Enhanced theoretical framework - Taganga. Source: Author.

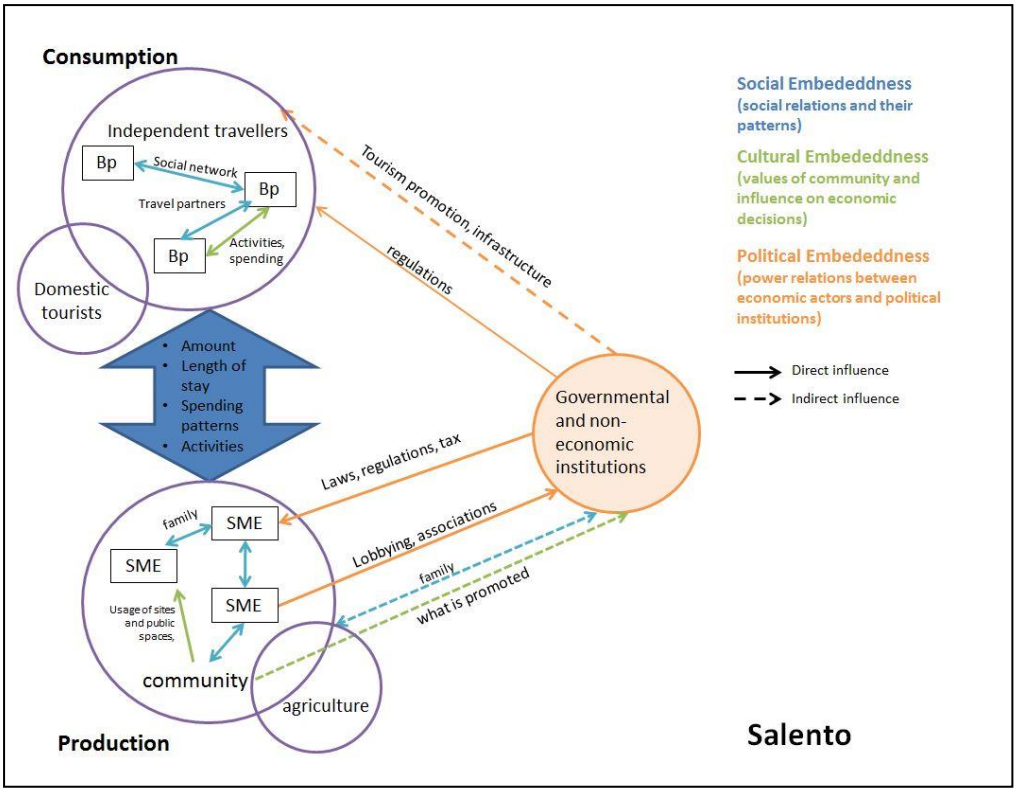

Figure 30: Enhanced theoretical framework - Salento. Source: Author.

The bridging of two existing frameworks into one allowed the new framework to be more

holistic in its level of analysis. The new framework provided a basis for a more integrated approach to analyse all aspects of tourism development instead of focussing on just one of them. Furthermore, it brought in different voices by including different actors of tourism development from different national and social backgrounds. The inclusiveness of all main actors and agents, and the structures they work within into one framework allowed for a more accurate analysis of the processes of tourism development and its implicit power relations that help to shape and are shaped by backpacker tourism development. It also gave a better indication of why these processes happened the way they did, and how the actors worked within the given social, cultural and political structures. This then, in turn, could lead to a more thorough and integrated analysis, considering all actors and their influence upon tourism development and on each other. If tensions or unequal power relations arose from the tourism development or were reproduced by it, these could then be better addressed by policy makers considering all actors involved. Since all the actors are taken into account, and how they influence each other's decision-making, it might also serve to forecast possible implications changes would have on the different actors, and how they might be affected by these changes (e.g. new policies and modified tourism plans).

On the consumption side, the study analysed backpackers from both LDCs in Latin America, and from economically developed countries in Europe and North America. This thesis therefore answered the call by Ferguson's (2011) to also include consumers from LDCs into PE studies, and not only considering them as producers of (tourism) products. This allowed the identification of different types of backpackers and travel styles as this study found significant differences between the travellers from the developed countries and from LDCs regarding preferences and duration of their trip. This not only led to more differentiated services and market segmentation, but was also a reflection of global inequalities concerning the access to travel, especially referring to financial constraints that influenced their length of trip. One group that addressed these inequalities were the artesanos, who were mainly Latin American backpackers who worked while travelling. They therefore acquired the necessary capital to travel by selling mostly handicrafts to fellow travellers. Thus they also somewhat bridge the gap between being consumers and producers of tourism, adding an additional dimension to the framework.

The production side of tourism was located within host communities that influence the

tourism development in their municipalities. The production and consumption of tourism linked the community into the global production and consumption cycle, bringing national, regional and international travellers and tourism businesses into the community. The findings somewhat reinforced Mosedale (2011), questioning if alternative forms of tourism, such as backpacker tourism, simply reproduce dominant power relations instead of addressing them. The analysis revealed that the backpacker tourism development had led to various tensions within the communities, especially between the local, Colombian and foreign business owners. These tensions between the actors of tourism are also often found in mass tourism development (Belisle and Hoy 1980; Gursoy, Chi and Dyer 2010). The tensions arising were also due to the reproduction of general global inequalities such as access to travel, which gave the business owners who had travelled (who were mostly foreign) a knowledge advantage over the ones who had not. Furthermore, these tensions were then also partially reflected in the involvement of the business owners in the community at an organisational or political level. The foreign business owners seemed to be little invested in the communities themselves, possibly due to their weaker social embeddedness into the community than the business owners who had lived longer in the communities and had developed strong social ties with local residents. Even though this gave the foreign business owners less visible political power, their economic power also ensured some form of power within the community in some cases, especially in regards to influencing backpacker tourism development.

In this study, the political embeddedness of the local, regional and national governments in tourism development was crucial, however, mostly in the light of the production of tourism products and their location within communities. The involvement of the local, regional and national government would contribute to the general environment created for tourism, such as the use of sites for tourism consumption, the laws and policies affecting tourism businesses, and the educational support provided by government agencies to prepare their citizens to participate in tourism as business owners or employees. However, on the consumption side, the national government only had an indirect influence on the travellers by providing the necessary infrastructure such as airports to get to Colombia and travel around, but neither the national, regional or local governments had an important direct influence on the backpackers. This might be different in other case study locations this framework can be applied to, such as in Bhutan where the national government heavily regulates the (Western) tourists with visa restrictions and daily minimum spending required

by the tourists (Nyaupane and Timothy 2010).

The main strengths of the framework were the different elements (actors) and their relationships that are made visible through it. It showed the interrelations between the actors and their power relations. The framework therefore served to create more awareness of these underlying relations and how the actors influence each other and tourism development in general. The field study allowed the framework to be enhanced by providing additional evidence regarding the actors/agents and the structures they operate in. The framework showed adaptability to the case study locations by allowing to add actors to the basic framework introduced in Chapter 3. This study found context-specific differences that are reflected in the final framework (Figure 30). In this study, the artesanos appeared to be actors situated between the production and consumption sides of tourism as noted earlier, and were therefore included as separate actors between the consumption and production sides. Additionally, shadow industries, especially in Taganga, were explicitly added as an actor influencing the host community and the tourism producers, while being little affected by the governmental actors. Furthermore, in this study the nationality of the actors on the production and consumption side mattered; however, in other settings it might not, or other socio-economic aspects might be more influential. The framework proved its flexibility by allowing actors to be added or omitted depending on the circumstances, and the various types of embeddedness can be weaker or stronger depending on the case studies or local situation.

The framework could also provide the possibility to be applied to various situations elsewhere, not only concerning the geographical locations, but also other small-scale tourism settings such as eco-tourism or community-based tourism. It could therefore contribute to a better understanding of the tensions and power relations of (small-scale) tourism development on a local and global scale.

The second theoretical contribution of this thesis is its contribution to various areas in the tourism and development, tourism and political economy, and the backpacker tourism literatures. Concerning the PE literature on tourism and development, this research included the historical and political context of a country into any analysis, following Britton's (1982) call. The context would influence dependencies within the country and communities, and the context would therefore be necessary to expose these. The country

context of Colombia is relatively unusual in the tourism and development literature, as there seems to be little research conducted since the 1990s. This thesis was written during the negotiation and finally signage of the peace accord with the major guerrilla groups in 2016, officially ending a civil war lasting over 50 years. This does not mean that the issues created by the long-lasting war will disappear quickly. But it might help to establish what Boyd (2000) called the 'normalcy tourism environment' in his case study on post-conflict tourism in Northern Ireland, arguing that a stable environment is necessary in order for tourism to develop. This could be especially true in the case of Colombia in regards to international tourism. The international tourism development has integrated Colombia into the global tourism market since the early 2000s. However, following up on Hay's (2000) argument that tourism is more an expression of regionalism rather than globalisation, this thesis only partially supports these claims. In the case of backpacker tourism in Colombia, there were both Latin American and international travellers from across the world present, with about half of the backpackers being from Latin America. This means that the backpacker tourism in Colombia was both regional and global. Nevertheless, this might be different for other forms of tourism such as mass tourism, which seemed to be more popular with domestic and regional tourists from other nearby Latin American countries.

The focus of the thesis was placed rather on small, local actors of tourism instead of global actors as often studied in PE research. It reinforced Fergusson's (2011) concept of regionalism by not only included actors from the same region, but also served as an expression of locality. This gave a better understanding of specific local conditions, as shaped by the historic and political context in Colombia, among other factors. These specific local conditions were analysed through the three types of embeddedness that influenced the local and regional context of the researched communities. The local and regional actors were, apart from the regional tourists, the local SMEs that catered to the backpackers. Even though Bianchi (2002) pointed out that these small-scale businesses could not change the system of production, this thesis focussed on how these understudied actors operate within the given system of production and consumption that they were voluntarily or in-voluntarily integrated in, and if they contributed to local and regional economic development. While studies such as Hampton (2003) and Shaw and Williams (2002) found that SMEs do contribute to local and regional economic development, this was only partially the case in this study. Although the SMEs created livelihoods and employment opportunities for the locals, the majority of the backpacker

tourism businesses were owned and managed by outsiders from the researched communities, either from other parts of Colombia, or mainly from Western Europe and North America, similarly to Brenner and Fricke's (2007) findings in Mexico. Locals managing backpacker tourism businesses seemed to often struggle more with running a successful business due to their lower access to finance and/or less knowledge power of the market. Therefore, the distribution of SME ownership somewhat reflected the regional and global uneven economic development, instead of diminishing it. This is contrary to findings by Hampton (2003) in Indonesia where locals with low financial capital and educational skills were able to successfully participate in backpacker tourism. The reason for this difference could possibly be found in the Latin American context, and maybe in the varying levels of government involvement.

This study further helped to answer the question posed by Mosedale (2011, p. 104) whether alternative forms of tourism – here backpacker tourism – inhabit different spaces between the market and the governmental actors, or if they reproduce dominant structures. Drawing from the findings and their discussion, in this study backpacker tourism reproduced aspects of the dominant structure that mass tourism is, such as foreign ownership and increased capitalisation. Examples for the reproduction of dominant structures could be found on both the production and the consumption side of backpacker tourism. However, this is not to say that mass tourism is experienced there yet.

8.4 Practical Contribution

The findings of this thesis have both managerial implications for the tourism industry and policy implications for governmental actors. For the tourism industry, the main implication of this study was the segmentation of the backpacker market. The different groups of backpackers identified required different services, with the flashpacker seeming to be a rapidly growing segment. They would require more sophisticated services such as more upscale hostel accommodation and more refined food options. This is a market segment that has only been recently addressed by a few businesses, but might be an indicator for the future development of a growing proportion of the backpacker market.

In addition, especially in Salento the average length of stay of the international tourists was

relatively short in comparison to Taganga. This might be due to the fact that the activities provided to the tourists can be carried within a one or two night stay. Consequently, the backpackers might not be inclined to spend more time in Salento. However, keeping the travellers longer in the community would mean increased spending on accommodation, food and possibly activities. Therefore, an increased offer of activities specifically targeted at backpackers, such as regular day trips to nearby hot springs or better signed hiking trails around the town, should be developed by the tourism businesses, possibly in cooperation with the local government.

Regarding policy implication and recommendations, this study could contribute practically to a few areas. Firstly, this study was an exploratory study analysing the backpacker tourism flow in Colombia, but already gives indications on popular routes and varying preferences of the different types of backpackers. This could help tourism planning policies in regards to destinations that are popular with the international travellers (as in comparison with the domestic tourists), and aid in identifying tourism products such as landscapes and activities that the travellers are drawn to. In addition to this study, a follow-up survey on travel flows on a larger scale could be a useful tool for policy makers to assess transport routes and transportation means. This could be combined with the knowledge of the travel flows during different times of the year, as the seasonality might influence how much transport is necessary to address the demand from both independent international and domestic travellers.

Secondly, even though this study had not been able to access more information from policy makers and their views on backpacker tourism, their lack of interest in participating in the research about backpacker tourism is also reflected in their policies. The lack of specific policies addressing backpacker tourism further served as an indicator that some local governments, and the national government in Colombia, were not much interested in or invested in this group of travellers. Although in Salento the international tourists were generally welcomed by the City Hall, the local policies did not necessarily reflect that and did not distinguish between domestic tourists and backpackers. This led to partially blaming foreign travellers for problems that were initiated by domestic tourism. Since both groups of travellers had different requirements and preferences for tourism products, there is a clear need to differentiate between the two tourism forms on a policy level.

The lack of local and regional government involvement, especially in Taganga, also had implications for the locals and their possibility to participate in tourism, either running their own business or as an employee. Their educational background often did not prepare them for successful work in the tourism sector. Therefore the local, regional and national government should invest in educational measures such as business skills and foreign language training to enable also locals with a lower educational background to benefit from the tourism development in their communities.[59]

Thirdly, the biggest implication of the lack of government involvement, however, seemed to be that the power vacuum left by the various levels of government was then addressed by shadow industries, especially in Taganga. This had a significant negative influence on the tourism development of the community and even the citizens of Taganga not involved in tourism. The local and regional policy makers should therefore also place some attention not only on neighbouring Santa Marta but also on Taganga, and provide concise and consistent policies to ensure a stable and secure environment for tourism in Taganga. It seems that the police presence has only been heightened for a short amount of time and when major crimes had hit the community. The case from early 2017 of an armed assault and rape of tourists (Iguarán González 2017) could be the initiator for more long-term change, with the mayor of Santa Marta promising to also tackle other illegal activities within the community, therefore moving into the direction of a consistent application of policies. However, with the seemingly underlying involvement of violent paramilitaries still operating in the area, as also hinted by one of the interviewees, and with their connections into local, regional and even the national government (Sontag 2016), this might be an undertaking too ambitious for a local or even regional government. The local and regional government might want to seek support from the national government to address these major issues that are threatening the locals and possibly the tourists alike.

8.5 Limitations and areas for further research

One constraint of the study was, despite several attempts over a long period, the relatively small number of interviews with governmental policy makers. Therefore the analysis of the

[59] Since fieldwork in early 2015, a new city government in Santa Marta has implemented some free English classes for business owners in the area (Alcaldía Distrital de Santa Marta 2016a), addressing some of the educational gaps left by the local education system.

political embeddedness was mainly based on the perception of the tourism businesses. The lack of interviews with governmental actors was especially true for the community of Taganga, where none of the policy makers from the municipality of Santa Marta, the governing body over Taganga, were willing to be interviewed at the time of fieldwork. They also showed no interest in the study even when contacted via email later on again after a new city government was elected after fieldwork. This lack of interest in the study could be interpreted as a lack of interest in backpacker tourism development by not only the local and regional government, but by the government across all levels. This was further apparent in the policy documents that the researcher relied on to analyse the political environment of the community, and to cross reference information given by the business owners in Taganga. These documents did neither mention backpacker tourism as an area of tourism development, and most did not even mention Taganga, even though it seemed to be one of the most popular tourism destinations within the municipality. This lack of government involvement in the development of backpacker tourism seemed not to be unusual, as Hampton (2013) already observed in other studies in South-East Asia. While policy makers could be interviewed in Salento, for future studies the researcher would further try to involve more policy makers from the regional and possibly national government and non-governmental bodies. This could be achieved by contacting key policy makers prior to the fieldwork and/or by also involving key business owners and their possible connections to local and regional policy makers prior to going into the field. Possibly, a pilot study could aid in making those connections before executing the main part of the fieldwork.

Furthermore, even though it is mentioned throughout the study, the consumers are generally referred to as backpackers, with the exception of the artesanos, as if they are a rather homogenous group of travellers. As some of the findings showed, the group is far from being homogenous, and the backpackers have different expectations, travel and spending patterns, and outlooks on travel, both the Latin American backpackers and the backpackers from the developed countries. These findings reinforced the conclusions drawn by Hampton (2013) who also observed the possible fragmentation of the backpacker market into various different groups of backpacking styles. However, this study did not leave room for much of this distinction. It would therefore be useful to take a more differentiated look at this kind of niche tourism, especially in the light of the up-scale shift in the market mentioned above.

Linking back to the findings of this study, there are areas that could be further explored in other studies. To address the question of the fundamental changes in the backpacker tourism market, a comparative study of various established and newer backpacker tourism destinations would be useful to compare if the up-scaling trend is a general trend or rather destination specific, and what the reasons behind this trend could be. It would also allow for a more differentiated view if this development of the backpacker phenomenon is just a fragmentation of the market of a general shift, blurring the boundaries with mass tourism as noted earlier in this chapter.

Additionally, more research could be carried out on artesanos, as there is only one known study on them (Broocks and Hannam 2016). Further research could assess their consumption and production patterns better, possibly also in different geographical settings such as other Latin American destinations or in South East Asia. Another exploration with regards to the artesanos could be their relationship with local host communities, and possible tensions that arise, as hinted on in Salento in this study.

The tensions between business owners and backpackers due to reviews on social media implied in this thesis could also be further explored, as this might be a power shift in the market and affect both the consumption and production side more than it does already. There are already some new studies on the influence of rating websites during the trip, such as by Tanti and Buhalis (2017). However, it could be further explored how they influence the decision-making during the trip. This could be particularly interesting applied to backpacker tourism as the travellers change destinations and accommodations frequently within their trip.

Further research could also be undertaken to assess the integration of foreign business owners into the local host communities. This might be helpful to address or even avoid some of the tensions that were pointed out in this study. Additionally, the absorptive capacity of local tourism business owners could be evaluated. It might be useful to study if there is causality between the integration of foreign business owners into the community and the absorptive capacity of the locals. It might be that the better the foreign business owners with their knowledge of the backpacker tourism market are integrated into the community, the more this knowledge is shared with the business owners without travel

experience. This could then create a more levelled playing field for tourism business development.

Lastly, the influence and power of the shadow industries would be an interesting topic to study more in depth to provide further insights, as there seems to be very little research on this except for Duffy's (2002; 2000) studies in Belize. However, as this topic deals with criminal and illegal industries, it might be too dangerous to pursue until the security concerns are dealt with by the Colombian authorities, and therefore the research in this area is limited and might remain this way for the time being.

8.6 Closing Remarks

This thesis aimed to investigate the nature of the relationship between backpacker tourism development and the power relations between the three main backpacker tourism actors. The findings showed that backpacker tourism development in rural communities in Colombia often reproduces existing global inequalities. However, as always, there were exceptions to this generalisation, such as the artesanos financing their travels through working along the way, or some locals making use of their absorptive capacity to learn from travellers and foreign business owners to successfully run their own businesses.

In this present study, the social and political embeddedness of the tourism actors were the dominant ones, with the cultural embeddedness being less significant for both the backpackers, the business owners and the communities. The social relations played a big part between the backpackers, between the backpackers and the businesses, and between the businesses themselves, heavily influencing economic decision-making on all levels. The political embeddedness was not significant between the governmental organisations and the backpackers, but was a heavily influential on the host communities. Where the governmental actors were largely absent, such as in Taganga in this study, the power vacuum left by the local and regional government was taken over by the shadow industries, negatively affecting the local community and tourism development. With more government involvement on all levels, local, regional and national, in the development of backpacker tourism, some of the tensions and issues raised in this study could be addressed. This may lead to a more equal distribution of benefits from tourism development within the communities.

The development of the new framework that includes all actors of tourism development and their embeddedness on social, cultural and political scales provided a useful and inclusive structure to the study. It also served as a framework for future studies, helping to address gaps in the literature that were pointed out earlier, such as the engagement of tourism with PE, and the diminishing of the dichotomy between production and consumption in tourism research. However, as with much research, this study raised additional questions that can be further explored, and that should also help our understanding of the interconnected and embedded development of tourism, especially in LDCs as well as other rapidly developing tourism areas.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Overview Interviews

Overview Interviews Taganga

Nationality	Age	Gender	Backpacker Interview #
Argentinian	26-35	female	2
English	26-35	male	
French	26-35	male	4
Belgian	26-35	female	
Belgian	18-25	male	6
Argentinian	26-35	male	
Argentinian	26-35	male	
Argentinian	26-35	male	7
English	18-25	female	
English	18-25	male	
Danish	36-45	male	8
Brazilian	26-35	female	11
Colombian	18-25	male	
Colombian	18-25	female	13
Swiss	26-35	male	
Swiss	26-35	female	16
German	26-35	female	
Irish	26-35	female	20
Argentinian	26-35	male	21
Polish	26-35	female	22

Type of Business	From where	Age	Gender	Business Interview #
Restaurant	Europe, Colombia	36-45	male, female	14
Hostel	local, Europe	55+	female, male	15
Hostel	Europe, Colombia	46-55	male, female	16
Restaurant	Colombia	46-55	female, male	17
Activity	local	46-55	male	18
Activity	Africa	36-45	male	19
Hostel	Colombia	36-45	male	20
Hostel	Europe	26-35	male, female	21
Restaurant	Europe, Colombia	36-45	male, female	22
Activity	local	46-55	female	23
Hostel	Europe, regional	26-35; 36-45	male, female	24
Restaurant	local	46-55	female	25
Activity	regional	26-35; 46-55	male	26

Overview Interviews Salento

Nationality	Age	Gender	Backpacker Interview #
Mexican	26-35	female	
French	26-35	female	1
Argentinian	26-35	female	3
English	26-35	female	
New Zealand	26-35	male	5
Slovakian	18-25	male	
Slovakian	18-25	female	9
Russian	26-35	female	10
Danish	18-25	female	12
German	26-35	female	
Indonesian	26-35	male	
Italian	26-35	male	14
German	26-35	female	15
Italian	36-45	female	
Venezuelan	26-35	female	17
Argentinian	36-45	male	
Argentinian	36-45	female	18
Australian	18-25	female	19
Scottish	18-25	male	
Canadian	18-25	male	23
French	18-25	male	24

Type of Business	From where	Age	Gender	Business Interview #
Hostel	local	36-45	female, male	1
Hostel	regional	46-55	female	2
Restaurant, activity agency	Colombia	26-35; 55+	female, male	3
Restaurant	Colombia	26-35	female, male	4
Activity	Colombia	26-35	female	5
Activity	Colombia	26-35	male	6
Restaurant	North America	46-55	male	7
Activity	Europe, Colombia	36-45	male, male	8
Hostel	Europe, Colombia	46-55	male, female	9
Hostel	North America	36-45	male, male	10
Hostel	local	36-45	male	12
Restaurant	Europe, North America	46-55	female, male	13
Hostel	North America	36-45	male	28

Governmental Actor	regional		male, female	11
Governmental Actor	local		male	27

Appendix 2 – Interview Guidelines

Interview Guideline Backpacker

Topic	Questions	Embeddedness
1 Statistics	f m Age range under 18 18-25 26-30 31-40 41-50 over 50 Country of Nationality Occupation Level of Education Would you consider yourself an experienced backpacker? (1st trip or not; where already travelled to?)	
2 Mapping	Would you please draw your (intended) travel rout in Colombia into the map. Include the amount of time you (intend on) staying in one place. How long is your trip in Colombia? How long is your entire trip (if travelling multiple countries)? Are you travelling alone or with somebody else? If with somebody else, please specify (relationship, nationality).	Social
3 Accessibility	1 Is this your first time in Colombia? 1.1 If no, why did you return? 2 How did you get here (plane, overland bus, sailing)? Why? 3 Was it easy or difficult to get to Colombia? E.g. change of planes, exhausting overland travel with long waits at the boarders etc. 4 Are travelling independently or with a tour? Why? 4.1 What is your main mode of transport? Why?	Political
4 Country Image	1 What made you decide on Colombia as a destination? What and where did you hear about it? 2 What influences you most when you decide(ed) where you are travelling to within Colombia? How did/do you plan your trip, what sources are you using? Why? (guidebook, blogs, videos, friends/family, fellow travellers etc.) 2.1 From what you have seen and done, have your impressions of the village been full-filled? Why or why not? 2.2 Were the impressions given in the guidebooks/blogs/by friends etc. full-filled, or did you have differing experiences? Can you explain a little.	Social & Political Social & Political Social & Political
5 Consumption	1.1 When looking for accommodation, how do you usually	Social & Cultural

	proceed? (pre-book online, walk around upon arrival looking at hostels etc.) 1.2 Has this changed over your trip? Why? 2 What kind of accommodation are you staying in at the moment? (tent, hammock, dorm, size of dorm, double/private) Why? 3 How are you feeding yourself? Restaurants, self-catering? Why? 4.1 What have you spend the most time doing here? 4.2 What was your most memorable/worst activity here? Hostel restaurants/cafés bars/clubs diving horseback-riding Coffee/cacao farm hiking (organized/self-organized) tour operator taxis internet café boat lease/tour other: 5 How do you decide which activities to participate in while at a destination? Where do you get the information about these activities? 5.1 Did you plan these activities by yourself or through a tour company/agent? 6 What do you think of the tourism/backpacker infrastructure? Did you find everything you need here? 6.1 Would you require additional services or could you think of products/activities, they should offer? 7 What do you think of the prices here such as accommodation and food? 7.1 Do you haggle? 7.1.1 On which things? Why 7.1.2 Has this changed over your trip?	Social & Cultural Social & Cultural
6 Community	1 How do you feel tourists are made welcome in this village? 2.1 Did you have to chance to socialise with locals? 2.1.1 If yes, can you tell me about it? If not, why not? 2.2 Would you like more contact with locals? (check for language barrier, possible hostility or cultural differences) 2.3 For Latin American backpacker: How has your experience been getting in contact or socialising with locals? 2.3.1 Has language made a difference in getting in contact? 2.3.2 Do you think it makes a difference at all being a Latin American backpacker? (“Well, have you ever been offered a discount, for example?”) 3 How much time do you spend with fellow travellers? Why or why not? 3.1 Did you known them before or did you meet them during the trip (e.g. in the hostel)? 3.2 Are they from your country or from somewhere else?	Social & Cultural Social & Cultural Social Social

7 Backpacker community	4 Are you using social media to during the trip to inform friends and family about your whereabouts and what you are up to? If so, which ones: Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube/Vimeo WhatsApp Blog Other: Why? 5 Are you also communicating with other travellers about your current trip, both offline and/or online? Why or why not? 5.1 If yes, how and where (e.g. Facebook groups, travel forums, notice boards) 6 If yes, what sort of things are you telling them about?	Social
8 Conclusion	1 How do you see this village developing in the next 5 to 10 years? Why?	

Interview Guideline Businesses

Topic	Questions	Embeddedness
1 Statistics	f m Age range under 18 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 over 55 What kind of business? restaurant/café hostel dive shop tour company coffee/cacao farm internet café souvenir shop/seller boat tours other: Education level Ownership structure: sole family shared (local/regional/national/internat.)	
2 Business	1 Could you tell me a little about your business, when you set up, why and how it developed? 1.1 year of initiation of business 1.2 size of the business (e.g. hostel beds, number of seating in a restaurant) 1.3 possible business partners (nationalities?); If yes, why with partner? 1.4 How many employees do you have (full-time and part-time), resp. how many people are employed in the business? 1.5 Who is employed (family, from the village/area) ? → why and why not (e.g. preferably not employed from the region because of educational reasons; employment of family members because of trust issues) 2 Did you have previous experience in the tourism sector? Or did you run another business beforehand (if so, what kind)? 3 What motivated you to open the business? Where did you get the idea from? 4 Why did you chose to open this kind of business (e.g. as hostel), and not another one? 5 Did you ever travel as a backpacker yourself (esp. if hostel owner)? If so, where? 6 Why did you chose to open the business here, in this place, not somewhere else? Did you consider opening it somewhere else? If so, where, and why did you decide against it? 7 How did you start out? Did you have some money saved up or did you get a loan? 7.1 Or did you built the business one step at the time, when there were financial means? 8 Where do you source your products from (e.g. food stuff, furniture, building material, equipment)? Why? (cost, quality, easy of supply…)	Social Possibly Political Social Social Social Social & Cultural

3 Consumers	1 What kind of backpackers are your usual customers (nationality, gender…)? 1.1 If mainly specific nationalities/gender, why is that? 2 What are the services they mostly ask you for (e.g. hostel: dorm rooms or privates; tour companies: most popular trips etc.)? Why could that be? 3 Do backpackers ask for services that you do not provide? Do you recommend other businesses then? 3.1 If so, are those recommended businesses your family or friends' business? 3.2 Do you not offer or recommend businesses or services that you don't agree with (e.g. a bar that plays loud music all night and keeps the village awake)? Why? 4 How do you advertise your services? (homepage, guidebooks, business networks, flyers/brochures etc.) 4.1 What made you decide on these measures? 4.2 (If hostel) Which booking platforms are you a member of? Why these? 4.3 How do the backpackers usually buy your services? Online (pre-booking), via a tour company/operator or directly with you?	Social Social & Cultural Social
4 Community	1 In your opinion, has the village changed in the last 10 years, especially in regards to tourism? 1.1 What are the main changes? 2 What are your views on these changes, how do you feel about them? 2.1 Have you discussed these views with others? (whom? Why or why not?) 2.2 Is that the prevailing view in the village? 3 Have you discussed running a tourism business with your family? How do they feel about you running a tourism business? 3.1 Do other members of your family run tourism businesses in this community or nearby? Why or why not? 3.2 What do they do? 4 Are you a member of a tourism association? Is there one in the village? Why or why not? 4.1 If yes, how is it organised? 4.2 If not, who represents your interests towards the local and regional government etc.?	Cultural Cultural Social & Cultural Social & Political
5 Government	1 Do you know how Colombia promotes the country to foreign tourists? (Note: maybe bring some brochures they can have a look at) 1.1 Do you agree with the image that is created? Why or why not? 1.2 Do you believe it might be beneficial for your business? Why or why not? 2 Are there any laws or regulations that make a big difference on your business, good or bad? What would you change about them if you could? 3 How is your relationship with the local or regional government,	Cultural & Political Political Political & Social

	esp. in regards to tourism? 3.1 What would you improve?	
6 Conclusion	1 How do you see the village developing in the next 5 or 10 years? What are your plans and wishes for the future?	

Interview Guideline Governmental Actors

Topic	Questions	Embeddedness
1 Statistics	f m Age range under 18 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 over 55 What kind of organisation Education level	
2 Organization	For NGO: Could you tell me a little about your organization, when it was set up, how it developed and for which purpose? 1 Please tell me about your role in the organization, your responsibilities and your day-to-day work.	
3 Country Image	1 How are you promoting Colombia/the region/the village? Why? 2 Who are your main tourist target groups? Why? 3 What countries are your target markets? 3.1 Has this changed? If so, why? 4 Do you actively promote backpacker tourism? 4.1 If yes, how? 4.2 If no, why not?	Political Political, possibly cultural
4 Strategy	1 In some other countries backpackers are seen as an important market. How do you/your organisation see them? Why? 1.1 What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of backpacker tourism? 2 Do you have Latin American and international backpackers incorporated in your tourism strategy? 3 Do you recognize the backpacker segment as a contributor to your tourism income? 3.1 If yes, why is it not incorporated in the strategy? 4 Some parts of the country/region are especially popular with backpackers. Have you noticed a change in the tourism infrastructure there over the past years? How do you explain those changes? 5 Have you noticed any other economic or social changes, e.g. the unemployment rate sank, a part of town got safer? Why? 6 When you make plans about the tourism future of the country/region/town, are the local community and the local business owners involved in this process? 6.1 If so, how? 6.2 If not, why not? 7 How do you see the future of backpacker tourism for your country/region/village in the next 5-10 years?	Political Political & Social

Appendix 3 – Sample Interview Transcript

Business Interview #15

I: Can you tell me a little about the development of your hostel, like when did you start operating?

R: For 4 years now, but tourism is declining. It is because of the insecurity. High season is in December and January, and in Semana Santa [Easter], but the rest of the time, there is little tourism here.

I: Do you have any employees then?

R: No, it is just the two of us. But you asked about the development, I have to say, there are a lot of accommodation providers now in the last years, and quite a few are illegal.

I: Did you have any previous experience in tourism or backpackers then?

R: No, we didn't have any experience. But we always had the idea to do something with tourism, because it is great for the village, a typical fishing village. But it's not fun anymore. Now it is mass tourism, the village is not as beautiful as it used to be. We wanted to work in tourism to be around people.

I: How did you build up you hostel then?

R: Bit by bit, really. I went to Europe to work to make money to invest it in constructing the house for hostel. I would go to Europe for half a year or longer to work, then come back and construct the house, then go back to Europe etc. We did that for some years. On the other hand, other people just came here with lots of money and built their places from one day to another. But yeah, I built all of this. I built the house and the furniture.

I: And where did you get the materials from for the construction?

R: I got the sand, cement etc. from Taganga and Santa Marta.

[Respondent gets up and comes back with coffee after a few minutes]

I: Oh, thank you for the coffee! Did you have any experience as a backpacker yourself? Or what motivated you to open a hostel?

R: I travelled as an artesano myself, so like a backpacker!

I: Interesting! What kind of customers do you get then?

R: We get domestic tourists and foreigners. But recently there has been more domestic tourism. And we get a lot of Argentinians, Chileans, Germans, English and Australians.

I: What do you offer them? What services the tourists mostly ask for?

R: We have private rooms and 4-bed dorms. Sometimes I would cook for the guests, real

Italian pizza and pasta. Or fresh fish. Or I recommend them restaurants that I know and that I trust, that are run by family, like the one run by my wife's sister. Because those people are honest people.

I: How do you advertise your services then?

R: We have a website and a Facebook page that our son set up for us, so the tourists can put their opinion about our hostel on social networks.

I: Are you also on TripAdvisor? Or Hostelbookers or one of those sites?

R: No, we are not on TripAdvisor or Hostelbookers. We tried to get into the Lonely Planet, but that didn't work out.

I: How do your guests book then?

R: That is different. Sometimes they pre-book, some just pass by here. But a lot of them look for cheaper deals.

I: What are your prices then?

R: We charge COP$20,000 for a dorm bed, and COP$50,000 for a private.
But others even come by and ask if they can put their hammock or pitch a tent in the garden. But I don't want that.
We also don't allow the guests to use the kitchen anymore. We built it for the guests and we let them use it for the first year. But they just used a lot of water and gas there. At the end it was more loss than what we earned. But I think our prices are fair, for both the accommodation or the food.

I: Did you ever think about opening a restaurant then?

R: Yes, we thought about it. We even tried for bit, but it is difficult. You lose money because the tourism does not remain constant. So you buy ingredients for cooking, but then nobody shows up, and the food gets to waste.

I: Why do you think then people don't come here?

R: Well, going into Tayrona National Park is expensive, and it is just not clean here.

I: When did you come over here then?

R: That was in 1987.

I: Wow, that is a long time. How has the village changed since then?

R: Well, you have to understand, the people here are a little lazy sometimes, but they like to make quick money. But they don't know how to give good service to a customer. And now the village is trashed, they just don't have any idea about the environment. But as a foreigner, you don't have a voice here.

[His wife, a Taganga native and indigena, comes and joins the conversation; she

remembers me from 2 years ago]

I: We were just talking about how the village has changed…

R2: Now there are also tourists here who want to take drugs and look for prostitutes.

I: And are those domestic or foreign tourists?

R: No, foreigners! But nothing is done about this, only on paper, but nothing happens.

R2: One is afraid to get involved in those things, because the same people, you know, those of the drugs and prostitution, could attack you or rob you. But this is a village and everybody knows each other… But the authorities don't do anything about it, they are just here to show themselves.

I: Has that always been this way?

R2: No, no, before it was different. There was less tourism, more domestic tourists came here. But in the last 3 or 4 years tourism has been declining… There is just too much corruption here.

R: Yes, before it was a fishing village, now it is a tourist village.

I: But do the people of the village work together with the government to address those problems?

R2: No, there isn't much collaboration with the authorities or city hall, especially for social spaces for the local youth, like sports grounds.
They just charge us taxes, but they don't invest here in the village, neither into the youth nor into the fishermen.

R: And the youths rob the tourists. And then the tourists leave, they don't want to stay here.

R2: Those youths need a strict hand, from both their parents and the police! They are minors, but they know that the police will not do anything against them. But at the end of the day they ruin it for all the people that work hard… They need to change the laws, because their families are accomplices, they know what their kids are doing, and even encourage them.

…

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