COMMUNITY-OWNED TOURISM:
PUSHING THE PARADIGMS OF ALTERNATIVE TOURISMS?

A CASE STUDY IN THE KICHWA AÑANGU COMMUNITY

By

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

SCHOOL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2017
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Community-Owned Tourism: Pushing the Paradigms of Alternative Tourisms?
A Case Study in the Kichwa Añangu Community

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Thesis - Masters of Arts

School of Anthropology
University of Arizona
2017
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Abstract

The Kichwa Añangu Community lives in Ecuador’s Yasuní National Park. As a community, they have chosen to dedicate their livelihood to community-owned tourism, or what is commonly called turismo comunitario in Ecuador. Tourism brings multiple, ongoing challenges to the Añangu Community. Shifting market demands, growing regional and transnational competition, and large-scale climate events each present ongoing vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the Añangu do not own rights to the petroleum reserves quietly resting under their land. Nonetheless, they persist in their tourism project and have become recognized as a model for community-owned tourism in Ecuador. In part, this thesis seeks to explore why the Añangu Community has chosen to not only pursue, but expand their involvement in community-owned tourism. This research will demonstrate that tourism is locally embraced as a vehicle for livelihood wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and cultural reclamation. The key question then becomes, why is the Añangu Community’s tourism project successful? Here, I argue that through community agency and governance, the Añangu Community is able to practice economic, environmental, and cultural self-determination via their local control of the tourism project.
Acknowledgements

I want to start by thanking the Kichwa Añangu Community and all of the staff at the Napo Cultural Center, the Napo Wildlife Center, and the main office in Quito. Thank you for not only helping me in completing this research, but for also giving me the opportunity to teach. Most importantly, thank you for your friendship and all of the knowledge you have shared with me. To the Mamakunas, thank you for welcoming me into the Kuri Muyu, for teaching me how to dance, sharing your chicha and being wonderful guides and teachers. Mama Vicky, Silvia, Erika, Judith, Midia, Elisa, Alisa, Sara, Silvia, Maribel, Enma, Bety, Eva, Silvania, Kimena, Micaela, Indira, Lida, Violeta, Maria, Janet, and Flora, I will never forget you. To Eladio, Rolando, Abel, Fredy, Pancho, Edwin, Andres, Luis Miguel, Jairo, Jairo, Jairo, Jose Manuel, Magdalena, Jheynson, Joffre, Rene, Darwin, Fidel, Eber, Deisy, Priscila, Stephanie, Benancio, Sergio, Veronica, Diego, Jonas, Daniel, Daniel, Cristian, Cristian, Orlando, Kevin, Ronny, Johnny, Luis, Edison, Anderson, Fausto, Nelson, Mauricio, Javier, Mariano, William, David, Remilio, Guido, Cain, Fredy, and Jiovanny, thank you for all of the stories, guidance, support and ongoing help, in addition to being wonderful students. I apologize if there is anyone’s name I forgot to include. To Stalyn Ortega, thank you for the emotional support and incredible friendship. I also want to thank Doris Galdamez for all of your efforts in supporting my research and stay in the Añangu Community.

I want to thank my Committee Chair and Adviser, Dr. Maribel Alvarez. As you know, I was ready to leave graduate school after two weeks. You encouraged me to stay for at least two years and as of now, I have successfully made it to three. No matter what my academic future holds, I will always be grateful for your emotional and academic support.

To the rest of my committee members, Dr. Marcela Vásquez-León, Dr. Ronald Trosper, and Dr. Mamadou Baro, thank you for taking the time to read this thesis and academically supporting me these last few years. I hope you will see how your classes have shaped my thinking throughout this paper. I also want to thank Dr. Linda Green and Dr. Tracey Osborne who as professors, have tremendously pushed and shaped my understanding of this research.

I am grateful to all of the agencies who have helped fund this research and supported my conference presentations. This includes the Kichwa Añangu Community, Yasuní-Amazona, the Tinker Foundation, the Willian and Nancy Sullivan Scholarship Fund, GPSC, the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, and the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona.

Lastly, I want to thank my family for all of your support, both academically and emotionally. To my mom and grandma, I will always be grateful that you took the time to come visit me in Añangu. You were able to see firsthand why I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work in such a special place.
Prologue

Story 1

In the fall of 2008, I embarked on my first journey as an ecotourist, spending four days immersed in Peru’s upper-Amazonian region. While there, I watched pink dolphins dance through the Amazon River, stared in awe at the gravity-defying acrobatics of spider monkeys, and guiltily enjoyed eating the piranhas who were snipping at my fingers only hours before. On the final day of this ecotourism excursion, I visited a Yagua community which performed a rendition of their “traditional” culture by wearing grass skirts, teaching tourists how to use a blowgun, and selling locally crafted artisanal products. Before arriving, I asked my tour guide whether these “traditional” practices were still the norm for the Yagua community we would be visiting. He hesitantly conceded that they were not. As we entered the community, I felt uneasy when I saw “Western” clothing drying on clotheslines inside of homes, hidden away from the tourist gaze.

While “cultural commodification” was not yet a phrase I routinely used or understood in 2008, what was evident to me was that culture was being sold to tourists, eager to purchase it as a consumer good. I further realized that there was an explicit and performed attempt to obscure the gap between lived realities and the Indigenous fantasies imagined by visiting tourists. Nonetheless, there were many questions I could not answer at the time. Why was this community engaging in performative, cultural tourism for strangers? Did they enjoy it? What was the relationship between the community and the ecotourism agency who brought me there? Did the community receive sufficient benefits? My trip to this Yagua community was the first time I really began to critically question whether being a tourist might cause more harm than good.
Story 2

Eight years later, I was again in the Amazon; this time, at an ecolodge in Ecuador’s Yasuní National Park. The Napo Culture Center is owned and operated by the Kichwa Añangu Community. For the second consecutive summer, I was there doing ethnographic research and teaching English. One rainy morning, I was sitting in the ecolodge’s restaurant, sipping coffee, while planning a lesson for my evening class. As I gazed at my computer, waiting for the slow internet to load, I was approached by two journalists, a married couple, who were hoping to write a story on the lodge after a four-day tourist excursion. They began asking me a barrage of questions. Does the community really own the lodge? Do the Mamakunas (mothers of the community) actually benefit from the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization? Who really has power? They wanted the “true” story, the one that supposedly would be revealed by the insights of the white, foreign researcher.

These tourists demonstrated a certain anxiety; an anxiety that I felt in 2008 and that many tourists expressed when visiting Añangu. Despite the tourism industry’s ubiquitous global growth, a number of tourists at the Napo Cultural Center shared concerns that tourism was harming the community. Ultimately, these two journalists wanted to know whether community-ownership over the lodge had genuine benefits for the community. They wanted to know whether tourism could do good, rather than harm.
Chapter 1
Introduction

After a windy, two hour canoe ride through the Ecuadorian Amazon, I arrived for the second time at the Napo Cultural Center, located within Ecuador’s famously biodiverse Yasuní National Park. It had been more than a year since I had left the Kichwa Añangu Community, who own and operate the lodge, and I was grateful to be greeted by familiar faces. As I disembarked from the canoe with a group of Ecuadorian tourists, I was greeted by one of the lodge’s managers. After a quick hug, Jacobo laughed and asked if I had noticed that Añangu had “shrunk.” It turns out, huge chunks of land had been carried away by the Napo River during a serious flood. Despite the missing trees and guard house, I nostalgically smiled as I gazed upon this familiar setting while walking towards the lodge’s restaurant.

Caleb and Esteban were waiting for us at the restaurant, one holding moist washcloths for us to freshen up, while the other handed out glasses of sweetened guayusa tea. Jacobo invited me to join the group of tourists for his welcoming speech. While we snacked on patacones and queso fresco, he gave an overview of the history of tourism in Añangu, explaining why the community chose to open two ecolodges, dedicating their livelihood to eco-cultural tourism. Jacobo emphasized that tourism has helped the Añangu Community share their Kichwa culture and protect their environment through conversation, while creating opportunities for young people to stay and work in the community. In concluding, he thanked the tourists for supporting the tourism project.

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1 During the time of my research, May – June 2015 and May – August 2016, the lodge was called the Yasuní Kichwa Ecolodge. As of January 1st, 2017, the lodge officially changed its name to the Napo Cultural Center.
2 All names used throughout this thesis are pseudonyms, with the exception of photo credits.
3 All photos are taken by the author, unless credit has been otherwise noted.
On the evening of their departure, after a eating a dessert of palm weevil grubs and white cacao beans, tourists are once again thanked by one of the lodge’s managers. They are told that they are helping the Añangu conserve their environment and reclaim their culture. The manager then warmly invites the tourists to someday visit the community again and asks them to please share their experiences with their friends and family. While it might be easy to frame these comments through the lens of marketing, there appears to be a sincerity in the manager’s words which goes beyond economic rationale. The question then becomes, what meaning and importance is attached to tourism from the perspective of Añangu Community members? Do community member feel that tourism is beneficial? Why have they chosen to own and operate ecolodges?

Throughout this case study, I will consider how in Añangu, having ownership and control of an eco-cultural tourism project has, in fact, generated a more responsible or ethical form of tourism. It will also explore how the Añangu Community is using tourism as a means of agency for determining how they want to ethically and culturally engage with a global economy which is often inextricably linked to extractive industries and alienated labor. While this work is based on a single case study, its goal is to share a
narrative which demonstrates the potential community-owned tourism may have for other small, highly organized communities interested in localized tourism. It is important to emphasize that this research emerges from the perspective of an outside researcher working and volunteering in the Kichwa Añangu Community. Although I will consistently cite interviews with Añangu Community members, all experiences and interpretive representations come from my perspective as a welcomed visitor to Añangu. Nonetheless, this work intends to share a story which can contribute to the growing body of literature aiming to understand the roll of tourism in everyday life. Given that tourism is a bustling global industry, with increasing importance to Ecuador and much of the so called “Global South,” it is important to not only critique the ethics and morals underlying tourism’s ubiquity, but to also examine specific case studies which offer alternative potential for tourism’s future.

In assembling this ethnography focused on community-owned tourism (COT), I will first review the literature which critically considers important opportunities and critiques embedded in the tourism industry. I will then look at the emergence of ‘alternative tourisms,’ by considering possibilities and shortcomings in what have been called more ethical or responsible forms of tourism. Here, I will make the argument that community-owned tourism, presents a nuanced and more ethically grounded approach to the ecotourism and cultural tourism industries. I will then provide a brief overview examining the relationship between anthropology and the study of tourism. While this review will consider major themes which have been researched and areas where the field can be strengthened. Finally, given that my research is looking at community-owned tourism through the lens of Indigenous eco-cultural tourism, I will provide an overview which considers underlying factors contributing to the emergence of Indigenous tourism more broadly. I will do this by exploring both critiques of Indigenous tourism and
opportunities presented by Indigenous tourism from the perspectives of economic wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and cultural reclamation. This section will be followed by a conceptual discussion of Indigenous self-determination and what I am calling Indigenous community agency, in an effort to frame why the Añangu are engaging in community-owned tourism. Before moving into the bulk of my case study, I will address the broader state of tourism in Ecuador, with an emphasis on the government’s support for “conscious tourism” and “turismo comunitario” or community-owned tourism.

Throughout the remainder of the thesis, I will focus on the case of tourism in the Kichwa Añangu Community. I will begin by providing a historical background of both the community and an overview of tourism in Añangu. After laying out my methodological approach to my ethnographic research, I will include three sections which each explore challenges and opportunities presented by community-owned tourism in Añangu. Specifically, I will look at the relationship between tourism and livelihood, the environment, and culture. Ultimately, my research in the Kichwa Añangu Community attempts to consider the nuanced dynamics of tourism which emerge as a result of Indigenous community ownership. To put it simply, what are the opportunities that COT offers and concurrently, what are its challenges? How does the Añangu Community interpret these challenges and opportunities? While this is only a single case study, can COT projects present a more responsible form of tourism for receiving Indigenous and other traditional communities?

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4 If the reader is primarily interested in reading the ethnographic case study, they can skip forward to the chapter titled “The Kichwa Añangu Community: An Overview.”
Chapter 2
Opportunities for the Future of Global Tourism?

A Critical Look at the Tourism Industry

Tourism is a booming global industry. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2015, tourism employed one in 11 people across the globe and made up 10% of the world’s gross domestic product. While in 1950, there were only 25 million international tourists, in 2014, this number rose to 1.1 billion and is expected to hit 1.8 billion by 2030. In the same year, the UNWTO estimates that there were as many as five to six billion domestic tourists (UNWTO 2016). The industry is also expected to continue growing at a rate of 3% to 4% through 2030, with particularly strong markets expansion in Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas (O’Neill 2002, UNWTO 2016). According to the World Economic Forum’s Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index, “emerging” economies are largely driving the growth of tourism (Blanke and Chiesa 2013, xiii). Today, tourism, and in particular international tourism, is no longer limited to leisure-seeking “Westerners.” Not surprisingly, Asia now spends more money on tourism abroad than all of the Americas. This is in large part thanks to China, whose tourists spent $292 billion on tourism abroad in 2016. The United States was ranked second, spending just over $113 billion (UNWTO 2016).

While tourism has been celebrated as a driver of socio-economic progress and local development,5 it has also been widely criticized. Citing Honey, O’Neill argues that mass tourism

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5 “Development” is intentionally left vague in this context. When connecting tourism to development, authors have used different interpretations and applications of the term, which are not always clearly defined or cited.
has contributed to “over-development, uneven development, environmental degradation, and invasion by culturally insensitive and economically disruptive foreigners” (Honey 2008, O’Neill 2002). Importantly, Vainikka argues that the term “mass tourism” is often ambiguously used and left undefined in academic literature (Vainikka 2013). She explains that today’s mass tourism is generally “considered more of a loose umbrella term for different kinds of large-scale popular tourism segments” (280), which researchers differentiate from “segmented forms of tourism” (i.e. ecotourism, adventure tourism, culinary tourism) (268). To visualize what is intended by the employment of mass tourism as a concept, picture beach resorts in Cancun, Mexico, or Orlando, Florida’s Disneyworld. Nuancing the critiques and differences of mass tourism merits further research. My discussion here is levied at the global tourism industry more broadly.

Tourism has been attacked for its negative contributions to climate change. The UNWTO estimates that 5% of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions are directly related to tourism (UNWTO n.d.). Aviation is one of the most significant contributors. While the climate consequences of flying may feel abstract, its contribution to climate change is substantial. The 1999 IPCC report on “Aviation and the Global Atmosphere” argues that as a result of aviation’s impact on the environment, flying “affects the lives of citizens in every country in the world,
regardless of whether they fly” (IPCC 1999). Nawijn et al. note that climate change will have serious consequences for “poor countries” (Nawijn, Peeters and Jos 2008). The combination of vulnerable infrastructure, eroding ecosystems, and overpopulation are already impacting the planet’s most at risk. In fact, in 2012, the Nansen Initiative found that 32 million people were displaced by extreme weather, most of these individuals being the world’s most vulnerable populations (The Nansen Initiative 2014). As tourism continues to grow, its contribution to climate change will also continue to increase. The desire to travel to and experience faraway places may have a romantic appeal, but in mass numbers, it has real consequences for people both globally and locally.

In addition to climate change, tourism has also been criticized for damaging local ecosystems and causing pollution. For example, Stonich points out that studies have identified how tourism development has caused “diminished biodiversity, erosion, pollution, and degradation of water and other natural resources” (Stonich 1998). In the specific case of Honduras, Stonich cites a report by the USAID which demonstrated that elevated levels of sediment discharge in the local water supply were related to tourism infrastructure development, such as new roads and hotels (Stonich 1998, 41). Mass tourism demands infrastructure, resources, and leisure space, such as golf courses or shopping centers. If a country or company wants to survive in the mass tourism industry, meeting customer’s satisfaction is a necessity, even if it means damaging the immediate environment or increasing local pollution.

Beyond environmental issues, tourism has also been critiqued for appropriating economic resources from governments and corporations, which otherwise could have been used to improve local institutions such as schools, public transportation, and hospitals (Cadena 2015, Stronza 2001). Infamously, Brazil has repeatedly been in the news for this very issue. As a result of the
country hosting the World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016, billions of dollars were allocated towards tourism infrastructure and stadiums. This prompted nation-wide protests, including one in 2013, when one million people took to the streets (Downie 2013, Winter and Teixeira 2014).

Economically speaking, money generated by tourism frequently leaves host countries due to the participation of transnational corporations (Honey 2008, Robinson 2003). The employment it does generate is often “low-paying service-level” jobs such as “maids, waiters and drivers” (Honey 2008). Economic contributions to local economies can be tenuous, given that tourism often depends on boom-and-bust cycles, leaving those who are working in the industry economically vulnerable to shifts in tourist arrivals or demands. Tourism has often been imposed upon communities by outside entities such as governments and transnational corporations. This has disrupted traditional means of sustaining a livelihood by prohibiting certain forms of work or excluding people from their traditional lands (Carrier 2016, Robbins 2012, Vásquez-León 2012).

On another front, it has been argued that tourists can be insensitive to local cultures, customs, and structures. They may drive cultural transformation, be indifferent to local norms, and oblivious to processes and potential downsides of cultural commodification (Stronza 2001, 270). They may also flaunt their wealth by staying at luxury hotels and resorts, while eating at expensive restaurants. Tourists are often saturated with material markers of economic fortune, made visible through the use of high-tech cameras, costly phones, and fashionable clothing, even if that fashion is “outdoorsy” or “hipster/hippy.” Tourism has also been a contributing factor to the growth of illegal or harmful activities such as black markets, prostitution, and the drug trade (Stronza 2001, 268). Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that tourists do not represent a
distinct, homogenous block. The relationship a given tourist has to a particular culture or place will depend on what type of tourism they are engaging in. They could be on vacations as different as a weekend trip to the beach, trekking the Great Wall of China, relaxing at a spa, or on a Saharan safari.

According to the UNWTO, the number of domestic tourists surpasses international tourists by billions of people each year (UNWTO 2016). Smith defines a tourist as “a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change” (Smith 1989). While this baseline definition may overlook tourists who are not only engaging in leisure, such as business tourists, voluntourists or even anthropologists, it does suggest that traveling an hour or two to the beach for a day should also be considered tourism. Emotionally, tourists will also have distinct intentions when it comes to their relationship with cultures and place. For example, in the case of enclosed resort areas, tourists may purposefully want to be physically separated from the realities of everyday life, culture, beauty, and struggles. In other cases, tourists may want to engage with and learn from local, “authentic” cultures. At times, tourists may not recognize how the romanticized notion of the “authentic,” may overlook the inevitable changes brought on by cultural encounters, technological change, and transnational globalization. It is also important to recognize that many tourists are critically aware of tourism’s critiques and opportunities. For example, anthropologists of tourism will usually be tourists at one point or another (Chambers 2000). Given these nuances in both tourism activities and the emotional relationship tourists have to these activities, it is difficult to distinctly identify how tourism impacts the world’s infinite number of cultures tied to the tourism industry.
**Alternative Tourisms?**

Within the broader tourism industry, alternative tourisms, also called niche market or special interests tourisms, have become increasingly widespread (Robinson 2003, 193). These alternative tourisms, which look different across the globe, include ecotourism, ethnic or cultural tourism, new age or spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, voluntourism, and community-based tourism, among many others. While the emergence of alternative tourism is economically linked to the desire to attract new segmented or niche markets, there is also an increasing demand for more responsible and environmentally sustainable forms of tourism (Caruana, et al. 2014, Goodwin and Francis 2003, Honey 2016, Munt 1994). Many of the tourists interested in alternative forms of tourism are seeking tourism experiences, which according to Eadington and Smith should be “consistent with natural, social, and community, values, [allowing] both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences” (Eadington and Smith 1992, 3).

Not surprisingly, alternative tourisms have not become flawless remedies for many of the shortcomings levied against mass tourism or the tourism industry in general (Honey 2008, Honey 2016, Stronza 2001). In looking specifically at ecotourism, Russell and Wallace note that ecotourism risks becoming nothing more than a “gimmicky marketing tool” hiding “irresponsible, unethical, and unsustainable practices” (Russell and Wallace 2004, 2). Honey echoes this concern when she says that ecotourism often “amounts to little more than green packaging or labeling of conventional or mass tourism” (Honey 2016, 384). In many cases,
alternative tourism projects may be able to capitalize on the application of specific discourses and keywords which appeal to consumers who are attempting to be more “ethical” or “green” when they purchase a tourism experience (Honey 2016). However, this does not guarantee that the tourism project in itself will meet the standards set out by Eadington and Smith. These projects often fail to be mutually beneficial (between hosts and guests) or uphold “natural, social, and community values” (Eadington and Smith 1992). Furthermore, despite travel reviews and tourism websites, often, tourists are not definitively able to identify which alternative tourism projects legitimately benefit local people and the environment, from those who are merely appropriating ethical sounding titles. Pulling from Honey’s work on ecotourism, we can ask how does a consumer know if they are purchasing “sound [eco]tourism” or “[eco]tourism lite” (Honey 2016)?

It is important to note that various certifications do exist, which are intended to guarantee certain standards of practice. The International Ecotourism Society explains that these certifications are intended to distinguish “genuinely responsible companies, products, or services” in the tourism industry from “those that are merely using “eco-“ or “sustainable” as a marketing tool to attract consumers” (The International Ecotourism Society 2014). However, certifying agencies may lack oversight and the certifying process in itself can be complicated and expensive. These certifications may benefit large ecotourism projects with substantial funding, more so than small-scale grassroots projects. Furthermore, similar to the use of alternative tourism titles, certifications risks obscuring unsound practices if standards of certification are not being enforced (Font, Sanabria and Skinner 2008).

Ultimately, untangling the ethics of alternative tourisms is a difficult task. There are vast array of alternative tourism forms and how they play out will depend on a variety of contextual
and localized factors. In narrowing the scope of my research, I am looking at alternative tourism which involves the active participation of Indigenous peoples who live in local “communities.” This requires a concrete analysis of agency, which will later be explored through the lens of community agency. As a quick side note, I want to emphasize that I put communities in quotes on this one occasion because I recognize that communities do not exist as a static or homogenous entity. This particular research applies community from the perspective of self-identification, where “communities” themselves identify as being a community. Additionally, in the case of my research in the Kichwa Añangu Community, the word community is used both as a local definition of culturally belonging to Añangu and is a legally binding term, which is recognized by the Ecuadorian government. The Añangu Community has legal rights to their land in Yasuní National Park and a defined governance structure which regulates community membership.

Generally speaking, active community participation in the tourism experience is called community-based tourism (CBT). Ecotourism and CBT often go hand-in-hand. According to the UNWTO, the practice of CBT implies that local communities are involved in the “development process” of tourism operations and that community priorities should take precedence in decision-making processes. They contend that CBT should be a “catalyst of social cohesion,” which is able to advance “sustainable development from the grassroots level” (UNWTO 2014). Rozemeijer expands this overview by explaining that CBT should either be run as a joint and equitable partnership between the private sector and local peoples or be owned by one or more communities (Rozemeijer 2001).

Despite CBTs potential, like other forms of alternative tourism, it may lack transparency in practice (Salazar 2012). Often, CBT involves community partnerships with exterior businesses, non-profit organizations, or non-governmental organizations. When this dual
partnership exists, it is not always clear where power is located or how it is organized and distributed. How much power does the community actually have in decision making and administration? To what extent do they have curatorial power in how their culture or environment are being commodified? Furthermore, given that it is either the community or the community’s land that is being both “advertised” and “sold,” what does the division of income look like?

My research moves beyond the complexities of these power relationships in the practice of CBT, by looking at community-owned tourism (COT). In community-owned tourism, the members of the community (or an association of communities) are the owner, administrator, and manager of the tourism project. While a community may partner with travel agencies and work with individuals who are not from the community, I am interested in power structures, where the community (as opposed to individuals, businesses, NGOs, etc.) is fully in charge of decision-making and management.6

Within the broader scope of community-owned tourism, I am directly looking at Indigenous eco-cultural tourism. There is often a close relationship between ecotourism, cultural tourism, and Indigenous peoples. Given the historical and ongoing exploitations of Indigenous peoples, it is important to carefully consider not only the damages induced by the commodification of Indigenous peoples via the tourism industry, but also how tourism might become an avenue of Indigenous community agency and self-determination (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez 2010).

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6 Community-owned tourism in Ecuador will be discussed in greater detail below.
Chapter 3
A Brief Overview of Anthropology and Tourism

In this section, I will provide an overview examining the historical relationship between anthropology and tourism. This will provide context for considering why it is important for anthropologists to take up tourism as a legitimate field of study and opportunities for the anthropology of tourism’s future. Broadly speaking, the anthropology of tourism has been gaining traction over the last several decades. It took until the 1960s for anthropologists to take on tourism as a legitimate subject of anthropological inquiry. Notably, in 1963, Theron Nuñez’s published “Tourism, Tradition, and Acculturation: Weekendismo in a Mexican Village” and in 1964, James Silverberg organized a session titled “Tourism: A Neglected Area of Cultural Change Research and Applied Anthropology” at the Central States Anthropological Association Meeting (Nuñez 1963, Davidson 1973). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, tourism emerged as a sub-discipline within the field, but its growth was slow and often marginalized (Nash 1996, 1-3). Dennison Nash, a trailblazer in the discipline, identifies three issues which impeded its growth. For one, the study of “leisure,” which was seen as “inconsequential or even a little sinful,” was not considered scholarly research (2-3). Secondly, by studying tourism, anthropologists were faced with asking themselves whether they too were tourists, forcing them into an uncomfortable position of self-reflexivity (3). Interesting, anthropologists have attempted to justify this by claiming that international tourists were “enjoying themselves,” while gaining only a “superficial acquaintance with their host,” rather than “understanding them” (3). On the other hand, the anthropologist was concerned with doing “serious, scientific work,” which attempted to do “full justice […] to their way of life” (3). However, this did not change the unsettling reality that both anthropologist and tourist were traveling to experience and observe the “exotic” other. Finally, tourism has often been associated with exploitative forces, taking advantage of native peoples for
the sake of the leisured class’s pleasure (3-4). Anthropologists generally take careful measures to avoid the reproduction of abusive structures, making tourism an uncomfortable subject of research, given its necessitated self-reflexivity (Nash 1996).

Despite these critiques, Nash contends that tourism fits perfectly within the framework of anthropological investigation (Nash 1996). For example, throughout the 20th century, tourism began playing a significant role in the economic and infrastructural development of countries around the world, changing livelihoods and expanding the market economy. On the ground, it led to mass amounts of “cultural contact,” resulting in social and cultural change. Burns corroborates Nash’s argument, contending that “anthropology and tourism (as a field of knowledge) have obvious synergy” (Burns 1999, 71). Burns goes onto to explain that tourism is a global flow of activities, impacting people across cultures. He contends that there needs to be a greater understanding of the consequences which result from encounters between receiving regions and foreign tourists. Anthropologists have important skills which can deepen their understanding of tourism. Burns cites Smith, who contends that “basic ethnography,” acculturation models, and an “awareness that tourism is only one element in cultural change,” demonstrates tools anthropologists offer to the study of tourism, in addition to an extensive awareness of how culture works in people’s lives (Burns 1999, 72, Smith 1981, 475). Burns goes on to contend that anthropology offers tourism a comparative framework, which will look at phenomena cross-culturally to identify patterns; a holistic approach which considers the links between social, environmental, and economic factors; and a deeper level analysis, which can look at a number of topics such as what causes tourism or what its impacts are for hosts and guests. According to Burns, anthropologist and other social scientist make significant
contributions to tourism because they focus on people as the “heart” of tourism studies, as opposed to strictly studying the business and financial implications (Burns 1999).

In light of all the ways anthropology can contribute to the study of tourism, how have anthropologists approached the subject? Nash posits that there are three lenses anthropologists have historically used to study tourism. First, anthropologists approached tourism through a “developmental” or “acculturative” lens. The development view focused extensively on the implications of cultural contact, where the host country or people would be changed. While some anthropologists saw tourism as making a positive contribution to local development, the majority critiqued how Western development and “modernization” were being forced on host communities through tourism. The acculturation perspective considered how the traditions and culture of host communities may be lost or transformed by the tourism encounter (Nash 1996, Nash 2001). Both the development and acculturation perspectives tended to view tourism negatively, often as a form of imperialism (Nash 2001, 1169). They tended to shortsightedly assume that host communities rarely have agency or voice within the practice of tourism.

The second lens through which anthropologist studied tourism analyzed the experience of tourism and the motivations of tourists. Drawing on Turner, Nash notes that anthropologists often characterized the tourist as existing in a liminal state, pursuing a “sacred,” ritualized journey or personal odyssey (Nash 1996, 165, V. Turner 1969). In reference to Urry and Nash, Burns refers to this liminality as the tourist’s “release from routinized social structure” (Burns 1999, 85, Nash 1996, Urry 1990). From the perspective of the tourism industry, this is an important angle to consider. Tourism is dependent on the satisfaction of the tourist. Nonetheless, Nash points out that this perspective may not always consider the great variety of motivations underlying the decision to become a tourist.
Finally, Nash contends that more anthropologists need to begin approaching tourism through a third view, where tourism is seen as a process. The processual approach acknowledges that the industry is not simply constituted of the host-guest relationship (Nash 2001, 1170). There needs to be research which looks at tourism’s broader actors, such as investors, tour developers, hotel representatives, and the transportation industry. It is also important to consider how government promotion of tourism or visa restrictions may impact flows of tourism. Nash further contends that there needs to be a significant focus on how “global influences interact with local conditions” to produce different forms of development across the globe (Nash 2001, 1171). In the years since Nash initially pushed for a more processual approach, it appears that many anthropologists have not only moved in this direction, but instead are now approaching tourism as a dynamic, multidimensional, scaled, and spatial enterprise.

For example, social scientist, including anthropologists, have begun studying tourism through the lens of political ecology (Cole 2012, Douglas 2014, Stonich 1998). The political ecology approach allows the touristic space to be studied as a layered, ongoing phenomenon, shaped by local sociocultural factors and ecologies, political economy, and human-environment interactions. Playing with actor-network theory, Lyons and Wells, are studying tourism through the notion of the “tourismscapes,” which builds off of Appadurai’s theory of “global cultural flows shaping the contemporary social imaginary” (Appadurai 1986, Lyon and Wells 2012). Lyon and Wells describe the tourismscape as an actor-network, which is constituted of people and things interacting “across different societies and regions.” The tourismscape is structured and defined by people, tourism services, the people and organizations providing services, and “networked objects” such as media, machines, and technology (Lyon and Wells 2012, 6).
Stronza contends that anthropologist have focused too narrowly on the origins of tourism from the tourist’s perspective and the impact of tourism on host communities (Stronza 2001, 261). By analyzing origins and impact through two restricted lenses, she points out that anthropologists are missing “half of the story” (262). In an effort to bridge this conceptual bifurcation, she specifically lays out several avenues of inquiry which anthropologist studying tourism could pursue. Notably, she contends that anthropologists should ask why host communities are engaging in tourism. It should not be assumed that tourism is always being imposed on communities or that hosts are in a universally subordinated position of power (272).

It is this perspective which lays the foundation for my anthropological approach to studying tourism in the Kichwa Añangu Community. Tourism is a complicated phenomenon, with global significance. While it is easy to critique the tourism industry, drawing from political ecology, it is also necessary to study it as a complex sociocultural phenomenon embedded in complicated “webs of entangled relations” (Rocheleau 2011).

My research does not intend to be an “impact study,” critiquing how tourism has been thrust upon an unwelcoming host community. Instead, I seek to study its opportunities and shortcomings by learning from the Kichwa Añangu Community, who almost twenty years ago made the decision to toil without pay every day to build their first backpackers cabins. This thesis treats the Añangu Community as active community agents engaging in the practice of community-owned tourism. Tourism may not have always been celebrated subject matter among anthropologists. However, ethnographies which seek to deeply understand the experience of tourism from multiple, multidimensional angles has true potential to make a difference in the landscape of global tourism today.
Chapter 4
Tourism and Indigenous Peoples

Given that my research is specifically focused on Kichwa Indigenous people in Ecuador, it is also important to take a careful and critical look at the relationship between tourism and Indigenous peoples. Specifically, it is necessary to consider why tourists are drawn to and fascinated by the commodification of Indigenous peoples. Why is there a market demand for the consumption of Indigenous cultures and bodies? That being said, it is also necessary to not overlook the role of Indigenous agency within the emergence of Indigenous tourism. While in many cases tourism has been imposed upon Indigenous peoples, there are several case studies which have examined why Indigenous peoples have chosen to engage in the practice of tourism. In this section, I will first consider various external factors which have shaped the emergence of the Indigenous tourism industry. I will then draw on several case studies which examine why Indigenous peoples are choosing to work within the tourism industry.

Tourists and Indigenous Tourism

In considering the case of Indigenous community-owned tourism, this section will first look at the significance of colonialism, as a historical process that reshaped Indigenous livelihoods into the present, while producing stereotypes and tropes of Indigenous peoples which continue to pervade the imagination of non-Indigenous peoples. It will then consider the importance of globalization and transnationalism in facilitating the growth and popularity of Indigenous tourism.
Colonialism and its Legacy

For many Indigenous peoples across the globe, the ruptures of colonialism violently reshaped livelihood. While the popularity of cultural forms of tourism today may feel distant from colonialism, it is impossible and disrespectful to not acknowledge the history by which colonialism not only created the “Native” as an “Other” within their ancestral lands, but also violently shattered the structures which shaped their very existence. This is a historical process which has had repercussions into the present (Fanon 2007). For example, Gould’s discussion on Indigeneity in Nicaragua highlights how colonialism not only viciously dispossessed people of their land, destroyed their communal structures, forced Indigenous peoples into debt-peonage, and levied violent attacks against resisting Indigenous communities, but has ultimately almost erased Indigeneity as a marker of identity in Nicaragua. This erasure obscures historical abuses and allows racial and ethnic discrimination to continue behind a fabricated mask of mestizaje (Indigenous-Spanish genetic mixture) and homogeneity (Gould 1998).

In the case of the Americas or the “New World,” Taussig contends that terror was necessary for creating a complex colonial hegemony of consent, by which Indians and Africans became “compliant to the reason of a small number of white Christians.” The European colonizers created a “space of death,” where the “culture of the conqueror and that of conquered,” mutually transformed one another, creating the “New World.” However, this “New World” only came into being through the construction of a hegemony mediated by terror. The repercussions of colonialism are many, but one long-term consequence specifically discussed by Taussig is the creation of a “social imagination,” which still exists today. Here, the conquered are still seen as an “Other,” where problematic signifiers of the past, continue to shape the signified of the present (Taussig 1987, 5). Colonial tropes and myths haunt Natives today, where the social
imaginary of primitive or savage Natives shapes how Indigenous peoples navigate their existence, while fighting through the gaze of a supposedly “postcolonial” world.

In regard to tourism, Davidov contends that the popularity of ecotourism and cultural tourism emerges from the “colonial distinction between civilization and nature, the civilized man and the savage” (Davidov 2013, 28). These tourists are embedded in the social imagination which constructs Natives as an entity which is distinct from the civilized human and society. Instead, they are a part of the wild nature, which exists outside of the “developed” and urban world. This form of tourism takes on a museum-like approach to experiencing history. Tourists are commodifying an exotic people who are supposedly fixed in the past, a past which overlooks the colonial ruptures experienced by Indigenous peoples. While it is important to not homogenize how distinct tourists envision or approach the experience of cultural or ecotourism, this aspect of Indigenous tourism cannot be overlooked. For example, Bunten, in her work with Alaskan Native and Maori cultural tourism, argues that Indigenous tour guides often do want to confront problematic stereotypes existing in popular culture, but also “feel enormous pressure to deliver a competitive product that appeals to perceived consumer desire for the ‘the Other’” (Bunten 2010, 52). In appealing to consumer demand, Indigenous guides may temporarily erase their colonial past, instead presenting a “model culture,” where the performance of culture is “sanitized and neatly packaged so as to neither offend nor overload the visitor with foreign information” (54). This “model culture” requires an “auto-exoticization,” where tourists experience the Western tropes of Indigeneity, which they have learned in popular media and through museums (55). This exoticization of Indigenous peoples cannot be disembedded from the colonial legacy or the continued postcolonial process. Notions such as the “noble savage” or the “primitive Other,” stem directly from the reproduction of Taussig’s social imagination, where
stereotypes and tropes which emerged in the original colonial encounters have continued to be reshaped and reproduced into a nostalgic present.

Colonialism not only violently disrupted the past, but as postcolonial research aptly shows, its legacy continues to play a significant role in shaping Indigenous’ livelihoods today. Some tourists and outsiders may romanticize Indigenous peoples as living in harmony with nature, outside of the webs of relations which shape everyday existence for “civilized” or “non-primitive” people. However, it cannot be denied that colonialism has inextricably tied many Indigenous peoples to particular modes of global exchange. While there are Indigenous peoples who continue to live in voluntary isolation, such as the Tagaeri and the Taromenane in Ecuador’s Yasuní National Park, the great majority of all people are in some way connected to global markets and capital flows, even if they are actively attempting to resist the capitalist system.

Silverman discusses the connections between Indigenous Peoples and global economic exchange in his critique of the documentary *Cannibal Tours*. As an ethnographer who has worked in Papua New Guinea for several decades, he argues that the film “silences indigenous agency” and fails to acknowledge that tourism is a complex phenomenon “rooted in a long history of encompassment and cross-cultural encounters that resist any reduction to a simple moral tale” (Silverman 2012, 109,114). Silverman contends that the critique of monetary dependency is particularly problematic because the inhabitants of Sepik, where he works, are embedded in a “thoroughly postcolonial and globalized world” (12). Money was brought into Papua Guinea repeatedly after the initial colonial encounter with Germany and continued with colonizers such as Australia and Japan.

Today, communities in Sepik need money for goods such a petroleum, outboard motors, footwear, and food. Given that the local community (where all living residence have always been
connected to monetary forms of exchange) has no desire to pursue a fully subsistent lifestyle, it is arrogant of outsiders to critique them for engaging in practices such as tourism (Silverman 2012). As discussed above, the shifts in livelihood imitated by the colonial encounter have brought most Indigenous peoples today into contact with global markets and its modes of exchange. While we must critique postcolonial structural inequalities, non-Indigenous peoples must show caution in arguing that Indigenous peoples should return to pre-colonial forms of subsistence. Indigenous peoples are still restrained by historical injustices and continued discrimination, but a fairer world would allow Indigenous people to pursue forms of livelihood that are driven by self-determination, free of colonialism’s many tropes.

Globalization, Neoliberalism, and Tourism

Robinson argues that a “transnational hegemony” is emerging at a global scale, as a part of a new epoch in capitalism, an epoch he refers to as globalization. Previous forms of capitalism have included (1) mercantilism and primitive accumulation, (2) competitive capitalism, marked by the industrial revolution and the strengthening of the nation-state, and (3) the rise of corporate and monopoly capitalism (Robinson 2003, 10). In the fourth or globalized stage of capitalism, transnational capital has transformed the power of the nation-state. While the state continues to play an important role in the lives of its citizens, it has also facilitated the rise of transnational capital through financial deregulation and liberalization and supported the privatization of the market, manufacturing, and property. The diminished power of nation-states

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7 In referring to globalization, Robison recognizes that people and goods have constantly been in motion at a global scale. However, drawing on notions such as Harvey’s time-space compression, Robinson holds that at “the core of globalization, theoretically conceived, is the near culmination of a centuries-long process of the spread of capitalist production around the world and its displacement of all pre-capitalist relations (“modernization”).” This is a process which has become ubiquitous in the current transnational hegemony since the late 1970s into the present (Robinson 2003, 10).
in regulating the market economy has allowed for the rise of transnational corporations and the
global mobility of capital. Additionally, this epoch of globalization has broken down global
barriers which once separated people. International multimedia and access to telecommunication
and rapid technology for travel (e.g. airplanes) have created what Harvey refers to as a “global
village” (Harvey 1989). Across the world, people’s lives are increasingly interconnected through
more personal forms of communication, travel, and immigration. Simultaneously, distant lives
are interconnected by impersonal avenues such as transnational manufacturing, global
commodity chains, and popular media.

One does not have to stretch the imagination far to understand how this epoch of
globalization and transnationalism is directly tied to the expanding global tourist industry.8
While international tourism is not new, it has exponentially expanded over the last seventy years.
As previously mentioned, in 1950 there were 25 million international tourists, while in 2015, this
number rose to more than 1.1 billion and is expected to continue rising (UNWTO 2016).
Robinson notes that the “whole world has been brought into the purview of tourism” as a result
of technological developments, communication networks, media technologies, and the
“boundaryless” access of transnational corporations and capital. The amalgamation of these
factors has driven the material reality of the time-space compression and has led to an
“explosion” of the global service industry (Robinson 2003, 189).

As discussed above, the opportunities available to domestic and international tourists
have taken on many forms. Robinson explains that there are many “‘niche’ or segmented

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8 Interestingly, the term “Trump Slump,” has emerged since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump in
January 2017. The Trump Slump refers to the U.S. Travel Association’s warning that the U.S. tourism industry is
suffering a “chilling effect,” as a result of Trump’s anti-immigrant actions and discourse. This wave of Western
“populism” and xenophobia as it relates to tourism, will be a topic in need of future research. I put populism in
quotes, because I am skeptical that President’s such as Donald Trump will be populist in action outside of
immigration.
markets catering to different income and ‘lifestyle’ groups worldwide” (ibid). Cultural tourism and Indigenous tourism have become two increasingly popular alternative tourism options. The motivations underlying the decision to be a tourist can change across both space and time and are dependent on the intersectionalities unique to a particular tourist. Nonetheless, the United Nation’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has noted that “indigenous peoples are increasingly recognized for their unique relationship with their environment, their traditional knowledge and their spirituality, leading to a commodification of their culture” (DESA 2009, 8).

While DESA is not directly referencing tourism in this quote, the connection between cultural commodification and market demand is common in Indigenous tourism research. Often researchers argue that tourists have a desire to experience or witness Indigenous cultures, while Indigenous peoples often recognize that their culture, or at least a version of their culture imagined by the outsiders, offers a competitive advantage in the cultural tourism industry (Hinch and Butler 2007). While the commodification argument is one general theory, it does tie back to the colonial tropes of the noble savage and the primitive Other. Tourists from around the globe may have a desire to see or experience cultures or people that are very different from their own. While there are many arguments as to whether anthropologists are tourists, the research pursued by sociocultural anthropologists provides evidence for the curiosity individuals have for engaging with people who have different histories and traditions than themselves (Nash 1996).

Regardless of the specific circumstances underlying tourist consumption, it is clear that there is a demand for Indigenous tourism, particularly “Western” tourists, such as those coming from the United States and Western Europe. Globalization has facilitated the ability of tourists to travel to distant locations, where they become immersed in a marked cultural interaction. While
there are several avenues available for purchasing a tourism package, many can be bought by simply visiting a website from the comfort of one’s home. Tourism packages may even include airfare and airport pickups. In these cases, the tourist’s only responsibility is to turn over their credit card information, pack sunscreen and a camera, and make sure that they are on time for their flight’s departure. Clearly, I am oversimplifying the experience of many traveling tourists, but I am attempting to highlight that in this epoch of transnational capitalism and globalization, going from the suburbs of the United States to the depths of the Amazon Rainforest or the African Savanna has never been easier. Well, this is at least the case for those who can afford it and have privileged citizenships, granting them easy access across the borders of nation-states. Simultaneously, Indigenous peoples also have access to the global community. For those who willingly chose to participate in the tourism industry, marketing and advertising have never been easier. Globalization shapes the tourism industry by facilitating the relationships, communication, and media-based exposure that exists between community tourism projects and outside visitors.

*Indigenous Tourism: Economic Livelihood, Environmental, and Cultural Perspectives*

“Western-based economic rationale” is often a key factor in driving Indigenous tourism (Hinch and Butler 2007). Today, many Indigenous communities and nations are entrenched in the market economy and may not have the desire or freedom to fully separate themselves from these economic relationships. In looking at the hegemony of the capitalist, global economy,

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9 For example, in the United States, reservations systems deprived Indigenous peoples of their freedom of movement, which was disruptive for all peoples who lost their traditional lands. Itinerant Indigenous peoples who seasonally migrated in pursuit of food among other reasons had their livelihoods completely disrupted. The reservation system forced these groups to turn to agriculture and/or commodified foods (Kimmerer 2013).
Bebbington argues that Indigenous peoples “are firmly integrated into a capricious and changing market,” where their “well-being and survival depend on how they handle and negotiate this integration” (Bebbington 1993). While this may not be true for all Indigenous peoples, the intersections of colonialism’s legacy and globalization\(^\text{i}\) has certainly brought many Indigenous people into the capitalist labor force.

However, researchers working in Indigenous tourism have noted that economic security and income are not the only factors driving the pursuit of tourism. Indigenous peoples and researchers involved in tourism have cited aspects such as livelihood stability, ecological conservation, and cultural revitalization, as contributing motivators for engaging in tourism. The following sections will draw on several case studies, where neoclassical forms of economic commodity exchange (i.e. the purchasing and selling of a commodity) are supplanted by a more nuanced consideration for understanding the motivations underlying the decision by Indigenous peoples to pursue tourism.

### Economic Livelihood and Wellbeing

The general underlying argument relating tourism and economic self-determination is that when Indigenous peoples either own or are co-owners of the tourism operation, they are able to become economically self-reliant.\(^\text{ii}\) This creates an opportunity for sustaining a livelihood on traditional lands as opposed to leaving for waged labor in an urban area (Peredo, Ordóñez and Belohrad 2015). This is not to say that they are not vulnerable to fluctuations in tourism demand,

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\(^{i}\) Like Robinson, in discussing globalization here, I am referring to Harvey’s use of the “time-space compression,” where global space shrinks as a result of telecommunications, media, and the facilitation of travel, where time barriers are collapsed into the present (Harvey 1989).

\(^{ii}\) The concept of “self-determination” will be theoretically explored in greater detail later in this thesis.
but if the demand is present, it allows a greater degree of control in curating the tourism experience for visiting guests, in addition to deciding how income is used and dispersed.

A famous example of tourism and Indigenous self-determination is the case of the Seminoles of Florida. While the Seminoles are not engaging in cultural or ecotourism, the wealth they have accrued from their casinos and as the owners of Hard Rock International provides a pivotal case study. Max Osceola Jr., a Seminole leader, explained to anthropologist Jessica Cattelino that American Indian tribes have not been able to achieve full sovereignty because they continue to be economic and politically dependent on the government of the United States (Cattelino 2011, S146). However, using their casino, restaurant, and service industry income, the Seminoles have been able to “buy back federal programs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to fund expanded tribal social services, cultural projects, economic development project and per capita gaming dividends. This income allows them to “reinforce their sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness” on their own terms, escaping the cycles of poverty imposed by postcolonial systems and exterior governance (S140).

In Spiller et al.’s work with Māori tourism operations, they found that while profit was cited as a necessary property for running a business, it was not considered the end-point of business activity. Instead, tourism businesses focused on continuously generating greater wellbeing, where the spiritual, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of business operations are equally as important as profit (Spiller, et al. 2011, 165). When working with tourists, the goal is never to simply provide a profit-maximizing commodity exchange. Instead, the Māori they interviewed viewed tourism as a way of creating “peace and understanding between peoples” (158). While visiting, customers become a part of an extended family and are expected to learn about Māori worldviews, such as being “caretakers of each other and of place”
In this example, the Māori design their businesses to incorporate and reinforce their values. In addition to determining their own economic livelihood, they are also practicing their own values in their businesses ethics, while attempting to extend a notion of wellbeing through their interactions with tourists.

Indigenous tourism may also have the potential to serve as an avenue for resisting the hegemonies of capitalism as an economic system and the related problematic theoretical assumptions based on neoclassical economics, where humans are determined to be self-interested, profit maximizing individuals (Gintis 2000). If Indigenous groups are able to employ their ontologies, epistemologies, and moralities in structuring their tourism business, Capel contends that it takes on the form of grassroots innovations or bottom-up solutions which focus on “solving social and environmental needs not met by the market” (Capel 2014). This may allow them to sustain important aspects of their Indigenous identity, such as reciprocity and interconnectivity between people and their environment; the belief that everything has a spirit and should be valued; the importance of identity, including language and ceremonies; an emphasis on the importance of ancestral and sacred knowledge; and a deep connection to place and belonging (Holm, Pearson and Chavis 2003, Trosper, et al. 2012). Indigenous peoples across the globe may engage with the capitalist market system. However, this does not mean that they cannot actively push against it by inserting their own worldviews and ensuring that tourism or whatever entrepreneurial endeavor they are pursuing is working for the benefit of their people.

Environmental Conservation and Stewardship

Ecotourism has been lauded has a responsible form of tourism, which can help preserve the ecosystem, educate visiting tourists, and provided needed income to local peoples (The
Nature Conservancy 2015, The International Ecotourism Society 2015). A similar message was taken up by the UNWTO during its 2002 “International Year of Ecotourism.” They emphasized ecotourism’s connection to “education and interpretation features,” “economic benefits for the host community,” increasing public awareness of the importance of conserving both nature and culture, and the ability to satisfy the tourist’s desire to appreciate nature while observing “traditional cultures prevailing in natural settings” (UNWTO 2002). Despite this rosy outlook, ecotourism has not escaped critique. O’Neill explains how tourism agencies may be able to “green wash” ecotourism. They do this by marketing their services to a “trusting public,” looking for an environmentally friendly option (O’Neill 2002). He goes on to write that corporations have little incentive to “maintain the environmental and cultural integrity of an area.” Interestingly, in regard to ‘cultural integrity,’ Davidov explains that in Ecuador, there are tourism training schools, teaching “Kichwa culture” to Kichwa Indigenous guides. They are learning how to commodify a consciously constructed culture as a product to be sold to tourists through performance and narrative. As discussed in the colonial section, she critiques tourists for holding onto notions of the “good savage” or perceiving Indigenous peoples as being “primitive” and existing in a “pristine forest: where they live in harmony with nature” (Davidov 2013).

While nuancing these tensions is a critical exercise, it is also necessary for understanding the relationship between tourism and the environment from the perspective of Indigenous peoples. This is particularly important, because as a Trosper et al. note, land for many Indigenous peoples is sacred, where the “source of knowledge is the land, not humans” (Trosper, et al. 2012, 568). Butler and Hinch also note that for Indigenous peoples, the health of the land and its resources is often far more important than the extractable economic value (Butler and
Hinch 2007). Given these epistemological perspectives, are there cases where Indigenous peoples see ecotourism offering tangible benefits?

The simple answer is yes, in the sense that benefits for the ecosystem are consistently connected to identity and culture. For example, while Carr interviewed a Māori tour operator, it was explained that owning the tourism operation on traditional lands was a political victory because these ‘family lands’ had formerly been confiscated. By being able to reengage with ancestral land, the operator increased both his attachment to his land and his *iwi* identity. Furthermore, while interviewing three Māori tourism operators, the importance of being able to “personalize the experiences of native wildlife and landscapes by incorporating their ancestral histories and family attachments to the land” was emphasized (Carr 2007). These operators appear to be using tourism as a tool for education, where false myths of pristine nature are replaced by lived sacred landscapes. It is also significant that they are able to continue living on their traditional lands, as opposed to moving to a city for employment.

In the case of ecotourism for the Lennox Island First Nation, Colton and Harris found that the construction of an interpretive trail has been cited as not only benefiting tourists, but also the local people. The trail has been especially important for youth, who have learned about their past from its interpretive panels, while also being physically active. Furthermore, because the Lennox Island First Nation merges ecotourism and cultural tourism, community members have noted that there has been a growing attachment to their Aboriginal identity. One informant remarked that since establishing the trail, “there has been drumming, dancing and more [cultural] knowledge, I think there is a lot more pride of who we are as Mi’kmaq people” (Colton and Harris 2007, 231). By learning ancestral performances, spending more time with elders, and being engaged with their land, youth, in particular, have benefitted from the presence of ecotourism.
One final example comes from Turner, Berkes, and Turner who found that among the Gitga’at of British Columbia, eco-cultural tourism was considered a “good fit for their community, because it was seen as more compatible with their resource use principals” (Turner, Berkes and Turner 2012). This is important given that Gitga’at wellbeing is directly tied to the “richness and abundance of their resources” (217). If the land or their resources are unhealthy, then the Gitga’at are also unhealthy. Furthermore, eco-cultural tourism serves as a good alternative to commercial logging, salmon farming, or other forms of tourism such as recreational sport fishing (Turner, Berkes and Turner 2012). Tourism has the potential to cause great harm, but in the case of the Gitga’at, they are able to use eco-cultural tourism as a medium for promoting “ecological, cultural, and community integrity.” These connections allow them to minimize negative environmental impacts, distribute benefits across the community, and allow traditional leaders to continue having an important role in decision-making (220).

Cultural Reclamation and Revitalization

McKercher and du Cros define cultural tourism as a “form of tourism that relies on a destination’s cultural heritage assets and transforms them into products that can be consumed by tourists” (du Cros and McKercher 2015, 6, McKercher and du Cross 2006). Employing this definition, it is clear that there is a direct connection between cultural tourism and the “commodification of culture.” However, is this process of cultural commodification inherently harmful or disrespectful of Indigenous cultures? Pettersson and Viken showcase several studies which have found that tourism can serve as a medium for preserving culture, where Indigenous peoples are proud to display their traditions, heritage, and cultural roots. By displaying culture in a public arena, tourism has been cited for building cultural pride and self-confidence. They also
explain that tourism can create a space for creative expressions, such as engaging in new artistic art forms (Petterson and Viken 2007). During their research with Sami tourism in Norway, they found that several of their Jokkmokk informants were proud that people came from all over the world to experience their culture. However, other participants were uncomfortable with certain aspects of the tourism experience. For example, one Sami interviewee expressed discomfort while being photographed, but felt that it was an inevitable aspect of being involved in tourism. Others expressed a discomfort with traditional costumes, which live up to the “tourists’ expectations of the Exotic Other” (Petterson and Viken 2007).

Silverman’s study on the Sepik people in Papua New Guinea found that artwork sold to tourists was not “meaningless trinkets,” but instead served as a “complex aesthetic expression of postcolonial identity” (Silverman 2012, 109). Sepik art is an ancestral practice, with a history extending long before colonialism. While artisanal goods may be produced for tourists’ consumption, this should not dismiss the symbolic value invested in the art form by the Sepik people. These art pieces often highlight the hybridity of Sepik culture, which draws on their ancestral roots and their current traditions, such as a faith in Christianity (116). Now that Sepik tourism has largely disappeared, the market for their artwork has as well. Selling artwork to tourists created an economic opportunity where they were able to engage in a traditional practice, using art as a form of self-expression, while making a living to support their engagement in today’s globalized and material world.

In their study on Māori tourism, Spiller et al. quote Ropata Taylor, a Māori man who works with Wakatu Incorporation, who says that Māori business is “not about commercialising our culture, it’s about culturalising our commerce.” Taylor’s goal is to encourage “economic activity that does not erode culture in the process” (Spiller, et al. 2011). The Māori tourism
operations discussed by Spiller et al. are connected to the capitalist economy. However, by infusing culture into their business activities, they are able to continue practicing key values in the Māori worldview. They are building business models which are founded on morally-based Māori ontologies and epistemologies.

Ultimately, cultural tourism does not serve as a full-proof way of ensuring cultural preservation or revitalization goals. Nonetheless, there are examples where the relationship between culture and tourism is perceived as being positive by Indigenous peoples. What creates this sense of positivity is highly dependent on the people, place, time, and culture that tourism is being practiced. Nonetheless, Indigenous ownership and control over a tourism project may have several benefits. For example, the host Indigenous community can prevent problematic misrepresentations of Indigenous culture in advertisements, shape the cultural performance tourists will experience and have agency in deciding how the relationship between lived culture and performed culture will be experienced and expressed.
Chapter 5
Indigenous Tourism: Community Agency and Self-Determination

Ultimately, through my research, I am questioning whether community-owned tourism can contribute to a more ethical or responsible form of tourism for host communities and the environment. While my critiques of the tourism industry have been broadly applied, I am specifically looking at niche-market or alternative tourisms dually focused on culture and the environment with Indigenous peoples. In an effort to frame how community-owned tourism may, in fact, be more “ethical” and “responsible,” I contend that it is useful to understand community-owned tourism as an act of self-determination driven by community and collective agency.

When I say community and collective agency, I am interested in the mechanisms by which a host community is able to produce self-determination through participation in community-owned tourism. While it is necessary to understand the historical circumstances which have produced spaces of tourism throughout areas such as the Ecuadorian Amazon, it is also necessary to not exclusively look at tourism as imposed from the outside or as an individual decision-making processes. Although inevitably filtered through my experiences, interpretations, and analysis, this work intends to rely on the voices and expressed agency found in the Añangu Community.

Ultimately, my research questions whether the Añangu are using tourism to achieve community-defined goals, which I ultimately see as an act of self-determination.

Indigenous Community Agency and Collectivity

Exploring the relationship between agency and Indigenous tourism is a difficult topic given the colonial history and structural realities which have in many ways produced Indigenous tourism (Davidov 2013). Nonetheless, I am arguing that Indigenous community agency is a key factor in the production of self-determination through tourism. Traditional notions of community
agency come largely out of sociology. Brennan and Luloff propose that the study of community agency, requires a definition of community. They argue that a community emerges from a “locality,” or a “place where people live and meet their daily needs together,” ultimately forming a “local society” or community (Brennan and Luloff 2007, Luloff and Bridger 2003, Theodori 2005, Wilkinson 1991). A dynamic “community field” is shaped by the various actors or “network of associations,” which address local interests and achieve common needs through social interactions within a locality (Brennan and Luloff 2007). This community field is not “devoid of conflict and self-interest,” but serves as a space for where “community is seen as emerging from the conscious experiences of local citizens coming together to address common needs” (ibid). The processual shaping of the community field leads to community agency, where interactions and relationships of individuals gives way to a “process of building relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite and act.” Brennan and Luloff argue that as “long as people care about each other and the place they live, there is potential for agency and the development of community” (Brennan and Luloff 2007, 54). I want to reemphasize that in Añangu, community is not just a theoretical and cultural idea. While culture and identity certainly hold great force in shaping how the Añangu define themselves (including those who deviate from the norms), my consistent use of the term “community” is also tied to the legal recognition by the Ecuadorian government of Añangu as a formalized comunidad, with rights to governance and land.

Drawing on Wilkinson, Matarrita-Cascante et al., explain community agency as “a process of building relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite, act and adapt to changing conditions.” By “negotiating, compromising, and accepting a series of diverging ideas and interests,” community agency can be a “central factor in facilitating social wellbeing
and is essential to the process of development” (Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan and Luloff 2010, 738-739, Wilkinson 1991). In studying ecotourism in Costa Rica, they find that community agency requires four key elements: strong social interaction, community-wide participation, open communication, and tolerance. It is also important to emphasize Eversole’s argument that the process of community agency does “not negate the importance of structural forces such as capitalism or globalisation, but it does provide a useful counterpoint to the victim trope that has long characterised academic studies of peasant and rural societies” (Eversole 2011, 53). While it is still necessary to recognize that communities are not a “place-bounded and internally homogenous entity” and may at times need external assistance, the notion of community agency serves as an “important corrective to top-down views of social change” (ibid).

Another way to understand community, specifically for Indigenous or other traditional peoples, is using Holm et al.’s, Peoplehood Matrix (Holm, Pearson and Chavis 2003). The Peoplehood Matrix is intended to serve as a tool or framework for identifying who is a “people” and what does it mean to be a “people.” Holm et al. explain that “the factors of peoplehood make up a complete system that accounts for particular social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological behaviors exhibited by groups of people indigenous to particular territories” (Holm, Pearson and Chavis 2003). In the Peoplehood Matrix, there are four key elements which define a “peoplehood:” language, sacred history, place territory, and ceremonial cycle. In working with Indigenous or traditional communities, the Peoplehood Matrix may be a more appropriate means of understanding how a group of people or a “community,” are connected, given that it specifically addresses the patterns and interrelationships that are produced through a shared history, culture, ontology, spirituality, and relationship to land.
In looking at tourism and community agency in Añangu, I want to also emphasize that scholars of traditional and Indigenous knowledge have found that community, connectedness, reciprocity, and cooperation, ontologically structure the relationships within many Indigenous communities around the globe. For example, Holm et al. argue that “Native American knowledge is based largely on the understanding of relationships—the interrelationship between human beings, animals, plants, societies, the cosmos, the spirit world, and the function of other natural, even catastrophic occurrences” (Holm, Pearson and Chavis 2003). If everything is connected, then any action will have effects on the whole. The wellbeing of the community is a prerequisite for the realization of individual wellbeing. Similarly, Trosper emphasizes that community and connectedness are two key aspects of traditional worldviews. From a community perspective, Trosper explains that “men and women are members of a community that includes all beings,” where “each has its proper role, and each has obligations to others.” He explains that while community guides obligations and behaviors, connectedness describes “how the world works” (R. Trosper 1995). Again, we can see that for Indigenous peoples there is an ontological understanding that humanity is ultimately dependent not only on one another, but on the welfare of all interconnected beings.

Why is this important for examining Indigenous community-owned tourism? If an Indigenous tourism project is ontologically built on principles guided by valuing community and connectedness, then the tourism project does not fully fall in line with Western worldviews, which understand humans as being “rational,” profit-maximizing, individual actors (Gintis 2000). Instead, decision making emerges from communal organizing structures, which recognize the importance of community connectedness and interconnected wellbeing. Agency, actions, and decisions emerge not from individual choice or relations, but from a community or a “people” if
we want to use Holm et al.’s definition. In the case of Añangu, both the emergence and growth of community-owned tourism, must be understood as having emerged from ontological perspectives which value community, cooperation, reciprocity, and connectedness.

Ultimately, I am combing community agency from a sociological perspective with Indigenous ontologies of community, cooperation, reciprocity, and connectedness to argue that the Añangu’s management style emerges from collective goals of wellbeing, based not only on being a community or a people in Holm et al.’s term, but of being a community guided by Kichwa ontologies. Specifically, it is important to consider the relationship between tourism and the Kichwa notion of *Sumak Kawsay*, or the good life, as a key strategy for understanding the tourism project. On a final note, I want to reemphasize that this notion of Indigenous community agency, which is inherently value-laden and ontologically driven, is a key factor in creating a space for achieving community defined goals and ultimately self-determination in Añangu.

**Indigenous Self-Determination**

If I am going to argue that there is a connection between tourism in Añangu and self-determination, it is important to first ask, what is the relationship between self-determination and Indigenous peoples? In the United States, the concept was enshrined into law with the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which gave Native Americans tribes greater control over federal funds (Bureau of Indian Affairs 1975). In Ecuador, the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador states that community organizations are an “expression of the people’s sovereignty to develop processes of self-determination and to influence public decisions and policymaking and for social monitoring of all levels of government” (Constitution
of the Republic of Ecuador 2008). The constitution also guarantees self-determination to Indigenous tribes living in voluntary isolation. At a global scale, Article 3 of the United Nation’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (emphasis added). Furthermore, in Article 4, the declaration declares that “Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.” (UNDPR 2008). While the transnational activism of Indigenous peoples drove the creation of the UNDRIP, it still has little pull in affecting change for Indigenous peoples (Echo-Hawk 2014).

There are several policies and declarations which protect self-determination, but what does self-determination mean from an Indigenous perspective? In the context of the United States, the notion of self-determination is deeply rooted in American Indian activism during the 1950s and 1960s. As a reaction to the Indian termination policies ending federal recognition of sovereign tribal status for many Native American reservations, “self-determination, not termination” became both a rallying cry and goal (Echo-Hawk 2014). Given the historical and cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples, pinning down one definition is difficult. For example, in looking at cultural sovereignty, Single explains that “each Indian nation has its own vision of self-determination as shaped by each tribe’s culture, history, territory, traditions, and practices (Single 2006). Ananya, who was a key player in getting the UNDRIP passed, links self-determination to human rights discourses, where “all are equally entitled to control their own

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12 Title IV, Section Two Article 96 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.
13 Chapter 4, Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.
destinies” (Anaya 1996, 75). While this acknowledges a certain universality, he explains that “self-determination gives rise to remedies that tear at the legacies of empire, discrimination, suppression of democratic participation, and cultural suffocation” (75). He emphasizes the need for a remedial prescription for those who are currently and have been historically denied their rights to self-determination. Similarly, in the Indigenous Peoples International Declaration on Self-Determination and Sustainable Development, it is stated that self-determination is achieved through “secure land rights and territorial management and the building of vibrant community economies,” which “provide sustainable local livelihoods, community solidarity and are critical components of resilient ecosystems” (IWGIA 2012).

Corntassel defines “sustainable self-determination” as a process where “evolving indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, relationships to homelands and the natural world, and ceremonial life can be practiced today locally and regionally, thus enabling the transmission of these traditions and practices to future generations” (Corntassel 2008, Corntassel and Bryce 2012). In using the term “sustainable,” Corntassel is not implying the reproduction of the current status quo, but instead argues that “sustainable self-determination seeks to regenerate the implementation of indigenous natural law on indigenous homelands and expand the scope of an indigenous self-determination process” (Corntassel 2008). I find his argument to be dually founded in addressing the violences of history in combination with presenting opportunities for future political and cultural sovereignty.

Quite distinctly, Indigenous activist and lawyer, Vine Deloria Jr. argued that the term “self-determination” is “used by everyone to indicate almost every idea they want to promote, and really has no meaning” (Deloria Jr. 1998). He explains that terms such as self-determination, sovereignty, hegemony, empowerment, and colonialism are abstractions that “we can discuss
endlessly without having to actually do something.” This is echoed in his famous critique of anthropology, when he says “abstract theories create abstract action” (Deloria Jr. 1969). However, in his book Custard Died for Your Sins (1969), he also calls on Congress to create a new policy for Indigenous peoples that would respect their intelligence and dignity (ibid). This new policy would be a block grant, where tribes would communally govern and manage how funds are dispersed. This reparations based approach to self-determination, would potentially provide the resources and freedom to make local and communally-based decisions through self-governance. This is an approach which is based in concrete actions, rather than discursive abstraction.

In analyzing tourism, eco-cultural tourism is clearly linked to capitalism and the commodification of Indigenous bodies and cultures. However, I am arguing that tourism, when owned and operated by an Indigenous community, has the potential to serve as a tool for achieving community-defined goals, which I am inseparably linking to self-determination. It is a processual approach to self-determination, grounded in the ongoing process of achieving self-determination. This ongoing process strives to achieve a dynamic and potentially changing end goal. Throughout this case study, we will see how the Añangu Community is making decisions about their future, for their community, through community-owned tourism. I argue that this collective, community-based agency is an act in moving towards both self-determination and the Kichwa ontology of Sumak Kawsay or the good life.
Chapter 6
“All you need is Ecuador:” The Politics and Ethics of Tourism in Ecuador

Understanding tourism in the Kichwa Añangu Community cannot be separated from the larger context of tourism in Ecuador. The Ecuadorian government is attempting to turn tourism into one of its leading export industries. According to Ecuador’s Ministry of Tourism, by the year 2018, they intend for tourism to be the country’s number one source of non-petroleum revenue. In Ecuador, tourism is also seen as a key generator of employment. In 2015, tourism employed one in 20 people directly or indirectly, 67% of which were women (Ministerio de Turismo 2015). The Napo Cultural Center and its sister project, the Napo Wildlife Center, are two key players in Ecuador’s ecotourism boom, a boom which has led to Ecuador’s four consecutive designations as the “World’s Leading Green Designation” by the World Travel Awards (World Travel Awards 2016).

The Ecuadorian government has also undertaken an ambitious marketing campaign, in an effort to attract foreign tourists to the small South American country. During the 2015 Super Bowl, thousands of football fans across the United States were serenaded by the Beatles’ “All you need is Love,” while they watched vivid images of Ecuador’s lush landscapes, colonial churches, smiling people, and the famously biodiverse Galapagos Islands.14 The thirty-second ad, which reportedly cost $3.8 million (CNN 2015), was a key investment in the state’s “All you need is Ecuador” campaign. Launched in 2014, this communication-based campaign intends to promote foreign tourism in Ecuador through rigorous advertising, a visually vibrant and interactive website, and social media promotions using the hashtag #AllyouneedisEcuador (Ecuador Love Life 2014). The campaign aims to display Ecuador as a distinctive destination for

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14 Link to the commercial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVAtiPmDIf4
exploring, relaxing, and feeling free, while visiting its “Four Worlds,” the Galapagos, the Pacific Coast, the Amazon, and the Andes. As one of its slogans reads, “You don’t need magic to disappear, all you need is a destination, all You Need is Ecuador” (Ministry of Tourism 2014).

In addition to promoting tourism for economic purposes, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ecuadorian government more broadly, have consistently asserted that they are encouraging forms of tourism which are responsible, sustainable, and focused on community wellbeing. In 2011, Ecuador began globally promoting the notion of “Turismo Consciente” or “Conscious Tourism.” First unveiled at the XI Ibero-American Conference of Tourism Ministers, Ecuador’s Turismo Consciente emphasized tourism’s capacity for promoting ethics of sustainability, peace, friendship, and mutual respect across all scales of the industry (Ama la Vida TV 2016, Castillo Montesdeoca, Vásquez Rozas and Martínez Roget 2016, Castillo Montesdeoca, Vázquez Rozas and Martínez Roget 2015, Ecuador Ama la Vida 2011, UNWTO 2011).  

Turismo Consciente was also included in the Ecuadorian Government’s Plan de Buen Vivir or Plan of Good Living (SENPLADES 2013).

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15 All Spanish to English translations in this thesis were made by the author of this thesis.
16 The original description of Turismo Consciente: “El turismo consciente es una experiencia de vida transformadora que genera un crecimiento personal que nos convierte en mejores seres humanos. Este nuevo concepto se sustenta en los principios de sostenibilidad y ética y promueve los valores de la paz, la amistad, el respeto y el amor a la vida como la esencia de la práctica turística. Constituye un pacto de convivencia, responsabilidad, respeto mutuo y comunión entre los agentes turísticos de las comunidades emisoras y receptoras, el turista y el patrimonio natural y cultural. El turismo consciente es un concepto vivo, dinámico y en constante construcción. Es una experiencia del dar y recibir.”
17 For video produced by the Ministry of Tourism on Turismo Consciente, see link: www.amalavida.tv/novedades/turismo-consciente-concepto
It is should be noted that the *Plan de Buen Vivir*, emerges from the Kichwa ontology of *Sumak Kawsay* or the good life. Because this research is focused on a Kichwa community engaged in conscious tourism, it is important to understand exactly how *Sumak Kawsay* is intertwined in Ecuadorian politics. Despite its Indigenous origins, it has become a key framework utilized by the Ecuadorian government in promoting its socialism of the 21st century. *Sumak Kawsay*’s inclusion in the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador received initial support from the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) (Akchurin 2015, Becker 2011, Radcliffe 2012).

In an interview with Carlos Benítez Trinidad, César Cerda Vargas, a Kichwa leader from the community of Puka Rumi in the Ecuadorian Amazon, explained that *Sumak Kawsay* is an “ancestral Indigenous utopia,” which aims to create new paths for a “more just society, more supportive [society], creating opportunities for integral human development (individual and collective), founded in a harmonious relationship with nature” (Benítez Trinidad 2014). However, Floresmilo Simbaña, a leader of CONAIE, told Enric Llopis in an interview, that the Ecuadorian government interprets *Sumak Kawsay* as “access to services.” The goal is to invest in “health, education, public works, and social services,” in an effort to move closer towards *Sumak Kawsay*.

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18 In Spanish: “Es una utopía indígena ancestral que trata e buscar nuevos caminos hacia una sociedad más justa, más solidaria, creando oportunidades para el desarrollo integral humano (individual y colectivo) cimentado en una relación armoniosa con la naturaleza. El Buen Vivir es, en definitiva, otra forma de plantear la vida hacia en bienestar social pleno.”
Kawsay or good living” (Llopis 2015). He explains that the income accumulated for providing these services is still dependent on the extraction of natural resources, which is ultimately contradictory to the Kichwa understanding of Sumak Kawsay.

Despite the ontological disjuncture in the cultural meaning and understood goals of Sumak Kawsay, the Ecuadorian government’s Plan de Buen Vivir includes tourism as a development strategy. It specifically mentions that tourism should be a key component of both the rural (65) and export economies (73), serving as a medium for protecting the rights of nature in national parks (73). It should also promote community tourism or turismo comunitario (268), while developing tourism which is “ethical, responsible, sustainable, and inclusive” (301) (SENPLADES 2013). The plan also explicitly states that in the Yasuní National Park, which is where the Napo Cultural and Napo Wildlife Centers are located, the government intends to “Promote conscious and sustainable tourism in Yasuní’s communities.” Yasuní’s tourism is being politically supported to “make known Yasuní’s natural and cultural richness, promoting its conservation and generating employment” (239 Plan de Buen Vivir).

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19 In Spanish: “El Sumak Kawsay es un tema reciente, bastante abierto y que se está construyendo. El gobierno lo entiende fundamentalmente como el acceso a servicios. Mientras más se invierta en salud, educación, obras públicas y servicios sociales –opina el gobierno- más se acerca al Sumak Kawsay. Pero esto lo hace sin poner en cuestión nada del modelo económico. Así, no importa que se afecte a la naturaleza o que no cambien sustancialmente las relaciones capital-trabajo. Para el ejecutivo se trata de aumentar los ingresos (por la venta de recursos naturales o vía impuestos) y luego redistribuirlos más equitativamente.”

20 In Ecuador’s 2008 Constitution of the Republic Ecuador, Ecuador became the first country to give rights to nature. In the opening to Chapter 7, which discusses these rights, it is stated that “Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes” (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008).

21 In Spanish: “Promover el turismo consciente y sustentable en las comunidades del Yasuní que priorizan esta actividad para dar a conocer su riqueza natural y cultural, fomentar su conservación y generar empleo.”
Why was tourism in Yasuní singled out by the *Plan de Buen Vivir*? In 2007, Ecuador’s President, Rafael Correa, made a groundbreaking request from the United Nation’s General Assembly. He offered to leave 900 million barrels of petroleum underground in the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT) Oil Block, located within the Yasuní National Park, which is arguably the most biodiverse region on the planet (Bass, et al. 2010). However, in exchange for leaving the oil underground, Correa requested that the global community financially contribute to the Ecuadorian economy to replace lost oil revenue. Specifically, the Yasuní-ITT Initiative called on international donors (i.e. States, non-profits, individuals) to provide Ecuador with $3.6 billion dollars, an estimated 50% of the profits Ecuador would have incurred from petroleum extraction (Davidov 2012).

In his speech to the UN, Correa highlighted how this would be an unprecedented act of global solidarity, where the world would act in concert to prevent the release of 111 million tons of carbon, while conserving a vital ecosystem (Correa 2007). While the

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22 As of 2016, Ecuador’s Vice President announced that oil exploration in the ITT Block found that there was as much as 1.67 billion barrel of oil, which is higher than the original estimate of 900 million barrels (Cifuentes 2016, Llangari 2016)
The initiative was celebrated by many environmentalists, it failed to attract sufficient funds. On August 15th, 2013, Correa announced that the Yasuní-ITT Initiative would be canceled (Correa 2013). Despite Ecuador’s progressive constitution, which seeks to safeguard not only protected areas, but also endow nature with rights, Correa invoked his constitutional right to call a National Assembly to disassemble the initiative for the sake of “national interests” (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008).

In announcing the end of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, Correa contended that the “world has failed us” and that “we cannot be beggars sitting on a sack of gold.” As of 2016, drilling has begun in the ITT oil block (Hance 2016).

In Section 3, Article 407 of the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution, it states that “Activities for the extraction of nonrenewable natural resources are forbidden in protected areas and in areas declared intangible assets, including forestry production. Exceptionally, these resources can be tapped at the substantiated request of the President of the Republic and after a declaration of national interest issued by the National Assembly, which can, if it deems it advisable, convene a referendum” (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008). This clause leaves Indigenous communities living both within and outside of Ecuador’s protected areas vulnerable. In 2016, I was sitting in Quito’s airport, about to board a flight to the Amazon, when I received a surprising news notification. The Huaroni Ecolodge, an award-winning community-based ecolodge project,
was being forced to close indefinitely, after the Ecuadorian government leased rights for seismic oil exploration to the Chinese oil company Sinopec (Sorgato 2016). While this lodge is not located in the Yasuní National Park, it is on the Waorani Ethnic Reserve, created by the Ecuadorian government in 1990 (although there were previous land protections established in 1983) (Hölcke 2012). The Waorani people who worked with the lodge are now losing access to their economic livelihood as a result of petroleum. Currently, the Napo Cultural and the Napo Wildlife Centers are not being threatened by oil exploration. However, the Añangu Community’s land is located on at least Oil Blocks 14 and 15. I have also been informed by several Añangu Community members that they do have oil under their 21,400 hectares of land, all located within the Yasuní National Park. If the Ecuadorian President deemed extraction necessary in Añangu, they too would risk losing both their economic livelihoods and several community-based projects being supported through tourism.

Despite the irony of the Huaorani Ecolodge indefinitely closing as a result of state action and the petroleum industry, the government contends to support turismo comunitario or community tourism as discussed in the Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir and the PLANDETUR2020, which is Ecuador’s strategic plan for sustainable tourism (Equipo Consultor Tourism & Leisure 2007). Ecuador’s Tourism Law also specifically supports turismo comunitario. For example, Article 3 of the law calls for participation of “Indigenous, peasant, montubia, and afro-Ecuadorean,” where they can preserve their identity, culture, traditions and ecosystem, while “participating in the presentation of tourism services” (Congreso Nacional de Ecuador 2002). Additionally, Article 12 states that “When local communities who are

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23 In Spanish: “Son principios de la actividad turística, los siguientes: […] e) La iniciativa y participación comunitaria indígena, campesina, montubia o afro ecuatoriana, con su cultura y tradiciones preservando su identidad, protegiendo su ecosistema y participando en la prestación de servicios turísticos, en los términos previstos en esta Ley y sus reglamentos.”
organized and capacitated wish to provide touristic services, they will receive from the Ministry of Tourism or its delegates […] all of the necessary amenities for the development of these activities […]“24 The Tourism Law also requires that a member of the Federación Plurinacional de Turismo Comunitario del Ecuador or the Plurinational Ecuadorian Community Tourism Federation (FEPTCE) be represented on Ecuador’s Tourism Advisory Council (ibid). Furthermore, in the government regulations for centers of turismo comunitario, there are certain protections afforded to communities registered as turismo comunitario. For example, the government prohibits the use of the phrase “turismo comunitario” or similar wording suggesting community engagement in the tourism project by any tourism operation that is privately owned. This attempts to ensure that the notion of “community” is not exploited for the sake of marketing (Sión de Josse 2010).

The notions of conscious tourism and turismo comunitario clearly impacts the Ecuadorian state’s agenda for promoting Ecuadorian tourism both domestically and internationally. While these legalistic and discursive strategies may lay the groundwork for the expansion of “ethical” tourism and supporting “communities,” it is important to consider how these discourses and policies translate into action. The long-term impact of government support for these specific forms of tourism will require a longitudinal and multi-sited study. For now, there have been numerous researchers doing ethnographic field studies focused on community-based tourism, turismo comunitario, and community tourism more broadly in Ecuador.

Not surprisingly, researchers have found several downsides to working in community tourism in Ecuador. Peredo et al. found that at the Kapawi Ecolodge and Reserve, the coalition

24 In Spanish: “Cuando las comunidades locales organizadas y capacitadas deseen prestar servicios turísticos, recibirán del Ministerio de Turismo o sus delegados, en igualdad de condiciones todas las facilidades necesarias para el desarrollo de estas actividades, las que no tendrán exclusividad de operación en el lugar en el que presten sus servicios y se sujetarán a lo dispuesto en ésta Ley y a los reglamentos respectivos.”
of Achuar communities who run the lodge have faced several challenges. Tourism has brought increased “Westernization” and has created tensions between Achuar communities, who have differential relationships to tourism (Peredo, Ordóñez and Belohrad 2015). Davidov has also identified emerging community tensions due to the commodification of Shamanic practices. She explains that Shamanic tourism has created ruptures between Shamans who see themselves as filling their traditional responsibilities and the Shamans who pursue the practice for profit (Davidov 2010). Hutchins contends that Indigenous ecotourism also risks reproducing imaginaries of “timeless, eco-friendly natives,” obscuring Indigenous diversity and lived realities (Hutchins 2007). At a very practical level, Smith and Peredo et al. have noted that a key vulnerability to working in the tourism industry is the inconsistency of tourism visits, which ultimately contributes to revenue inconsistencies (Peredo, Ordóñez and Belohrad 2015, K. Smith 2015).

Nonetheless, the struggles are not the whole story. In considering the relationship between tourism and livelihood, Ruiz-Ballesteros et al. argue that turismo comunitario serves as an adaptive strategy in a world where community borders are inevitably infiltrated by processes of globalization (Ruiz-Ballesteros, Hernández, et al. 2008). Turismo comunitario prevents the community structure from becoming ineffective or obsolete. In her work in the Machalilla National Park, Smith explains that despite seasonal disparities in tourism visits, both ecotourism and archaeological tourism have become an important source of income for the community of Agua Blanca (K. Smith 2015, 163). In the case of the Kapawi, Peredo explains that tourism has created job opportunities for Achuar youth, who are now less likely to migrate to urban areas for work (Peredo, Ordóñez and Belohrad 2015). This is echoed by Davidov, who explains that many youths are leaving their communities to study guiding, ecotourism, or conversation. They then
return to their communities, to participate in the local tourism project. Davidov also acknowledges that tourism has created a “gendered domain of cultural capital for women” (Davidov 2013, 146). Through tourism, many women have found employment producing artisanal crafts, cooking, and working in other tourism-related services. Finally, Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez note that tourism comunitario may not only provide direct income to employees, but may also finance community projects (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez 2010).

From an ecological perspective, Gould finds that in both Belize and Ecuador, communities are using “tactical tourism,” to protect tropical ecosystems from the “ravages of export agriculture and energy extraction” (Gould 1999). For example, in Ecuador, Transturi Touring and its Cofán partners were able to successfully pressure the Ecuadorian government into creating the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, after they were forced to relocate their tourism operation due to oil extraction in the region. Gould contends that for the Cofan of Zabalo, tourism is primarily a “forest protection strategy,” rather than an “economic development strategy” (251-252). Similarly, Wesche explains that in Ecuador, Indigenous communities initially become involved in “indigenous community controlled ecotourism” to resist the harms incurred by oil exploitation, outside settlers, and management of tourism operations where they had no voice (Wesche 1996).

From a cultural standpoint, Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez push against arguments that cultural tourism “destroys” local cultures. Instead, they find that while commodification can “change or create cultural elements,” it also offers new avenues for constructing cultural identity through the presence of “archeological, historical and tourism information” (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez 2010). Hutchens notes that Kichwa
communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon use tourism as a means for “cultural preservation,” not only to sell their product, but also because they feel their “culture is being lost as new values and desires enter from other cultural domains” (Hutchins 2007, 85). Despite the calls for cultural “conservation,” or “preservation,” he notes that Kichwa communities are not trying to “consciously [freeze] all things cultural.” Instead, tourism plays a role in “rescuing” or “validating” aspects of their culture (Hutchins 2007, 84).

Although emphasizing the inseparability of ecoturismo (eco-cultural tourism) and colonial fantasies, Davidov pointedly explains that “indigenous actors in Ecuador are not passive subjects of repurposed colonial fantasies—for them ecotourism is at various times a way to challenge those fantasies, to mobilize those fantasies in pursuit of political goals, or a medium to assert certain forms of cultural and environmental cosmopolitical tenets and claims to sovereignty vis-à-vis the state” (Davidov 2013, 28). This premise is a key argument emerging from my research in the Kichwa Añangu Community. In looking specifically at turismo comunitario or community-owned tourism (COT), I am asking why the Añangu Community is dedicating their livelihood to tourism. What opportunities do we see deriving from the practice of community-owned tourism?

Over the course of my fieldwork, seven employees, each from a different Kichwa community, told me that they were planning on initiating a tourism project in their own community. Working at the Napo Cultural Center was a learning process, where they would learn the skills and challenges necessitated to have a chance at a successful community-owned tourism project. From a practical, applied perspective, this case study intends to examine why community-owned tourism has been embraced by the Añangu, despite ongoing challenges. While it is not intended to serve as a “how-to” guide for other communities looking to pursue
community-owned eco-cultural tourism, it does intend to serve as a text for those people and communities who are interested in considering the ethics of tourism from an in-depth, case study perspective. This is a perspective which does not treat the Añangu as “passive subjects of repurposed colonial studies” (Davidov 2013, 146). Instead, I am arguing that despite social and historical inequities and constraints, the Añangu have expressed agency in initiating a project which has allowed them to pursue and achieve community defined goals, related to livelihood, the environment, and culture.
Chapter 7
The Kichwa Añangu Community: An Overview

The Kichwa Añangu Community (Kichwa Añangu Llactama - Comunidad Kichwa Añangu (CKA) live along the banks of the Napo River, inside of the Yasuní National Park. The community is located in the Bajo Napo western region of the Amazon, inside of Orellana Province. All community members are lowland Kichwas or Kichwa people from the Amazon. The majority of Kichwa communities in the Amazon live in what is called the “gateway of the Amazon,” or the area where the Amazonian basin meets the Andean foothills (Davidov 2013). Añangu’s founding community members are originally from cities such as Tena and Archidona, located in Napo Province in the Alto Napo. In 1970, a boat motorist operating out of Misahuallí, noticed that stretches of land in what today is the Yasuní National Park, were uninhabited. Looking to escape increasing settler colonialism and the pitfalls of urban expansion in Napo Province, families began migrating to the dense forest which would eventually become the Kichwa Añangu Community. Historically speaking, it is important to note that the Ecuadorian government passed Amazonian colonization laws in 1964 and 1977. According to Yashar, these state laws aimed to “civilize” the Amazon region, putting titles on supposedly unclaimed lands, while generating economic growth through enterprises such as cattle grazing and logging. Consequently, Yashar states that in Ecuador and other South American countries, “the ensuing patterns of colonization led to significant waves of internal migration and titling that pushed indigenous communities off lands that they used (i.e., for hunting, fishing, gathering,
etc.) and to which they did not have title or “proof of use” (since they did not necessarily cultivate and farm these lands) (Yashar 2006).

Throughout the 1970s, the Añangu Community’s population went through cyclical growth spurts and crashes. Not only were they faced with the challenges of domesticating the land and the lack of basic services (clean water, electricity, etc.), they also had to combat mosquitos and disease. Nonetheless, in 1982 the community was granted official recognition as the pre-association Sacha Pacha (Puro Selva or Pure Rainforest in Kichwa) by the Congress of the Union de Nacionalidades Amazónicos del Ecuador (Union of Amazonian Nationalities of Ecuador) (Amores Grandes 2012).

While population numbers had grown to sixty families by 1984, the community had conflicts with its neighbors and struggled to develop on swampy land. In 1987, they were significantly impacted by the eruption of the Reventador Volcano. Simultaneously, portions of their land were also being occupied by the military, who disrupted community wellbeing and resources (Amores Grandes 2012). Despite these challenges, the adult community members or socios pushed forward. In 1986, they changed their name to the Centro Kichwa Añangu. In 1994, the community gained legal status in Ecuador. Their territory was further protected by the Ecuadorian Government’s Plan de Uso y Manejo Territorial (Plan for the
Use and Management of Territory), the *Convenio para el Uso y Aprovechamiento Racional de los Recursos* (Agreement for the Use and Rational Extraction of Resource), and the *Plan de Manejo de un Sector del Parque Nacional Yasuní* (Plan for the Management of a Sector from the Yasuní National Park). Each of these acts was intended to protect the territory of six Indigenous communities, with ancestral claims to land, in the northwest region of the Yasuní National Park (FLACSO 2007).

In Kichwa, Añangu means ant or *hormiga*. In part, the community chose this name in honor of Lake Añangucocha, which sits on Añangu’s 21,400 hectares of land. Añangu also has symbolic importance. According to Wilkie et al., Yasuní appears to “support the most diverse ant fauna” ever recorded (Ryder Wilkie, Mertl and Traniello 2010). While ecologists and biologists have done their job measuring and recording Yasuní’s truly unique biodiversity (Bass, et al. 2010, Ryder Wilkie, Mertl and Traniello 2010), any lay person strolling through Yasuní will not miss the endless parades of leafcutter ants, tirelessly working as a team day and night. Out of respect and admiration (even when the leafcutters decimate their cassava crops), the Añangu chose to metaphorically align their own work ethic, with that of the leafcutters.

At the time of my fieldwork, Añangu had approximately 188 permanent community members, including children and adults. Of those 188, there were nearly seventy *socios* or adult community members. Being a *socio* is a commitment. It includes participating in monthly assemblies, following community-defined rules, and attending *mingas* or communal work sessions. Not all adults are required to become *socios*, but for those who do, you have access to land and a voice in community governing structures. Añangu is known for having strict
community rules. For example, the community has made the decision to stop all hunting. They also forbid all livestock, with the exception of chickens. They limit tree felling and the consumption of alcohol. They have also created “typical clothes.” While many would assume that the clothing was designed for tourism alone, in a later section we will look at the importance of this clothing for the community. Lastly, it is important to note that multiple individuals connected to the Añangu Community, such as guides from other regions, have told me that the community has been extremely successful (not just at tourism) because they both have rules and follow them. While my research is not explicitly focused on quantitatively measuring the impact of these rules on natural resource management, it certainly brings to mind Elinor Ostrom’s studies of the commons. How might these rules lead to a “long-surviving, self-governing” commons in Añangu? (Ostrom 2000). The connection between eco-cultural community-owned tourism and commons research is ripe for further study.

On a geographic note, all families in Añangu have homes along the Napo River. Each family has land to build a home and plant a chacra, or small farm. The primary crops on the chacra are plantain and cassava. Cassava is used to make chicha, a fermented beverage which has historical importance to Kichwa peoples. Some families also grow rice, corn, tobacco, and other crops, in addition to having small gardens, which often have herbs for medicinal purposes. Several families have cacao, palm, coconut, and coffee trees. In fact, the community is currently working with a government program to grow and sell their own coffee locally. When outside representatives...
from the coffee project first arrived to Añangu, they only saw the *Mamakunas* working. One of them finally asked, “Are there only women in this community?” With a straight face, Liana responded, “Yes, there are only women.” She laughed as they stared in confusion.

There is a wide path maintained by the community, which goes up and down the Napo River, reaching each home in the community. Several homes are approximately an hour walk to the Community Center, a walk made by *Mamakunas* and students most days of the week. The Community Center is an important gathering space. For one, the community’s monthly meetings are held in the *Casa Comunal* or Communal House. The school, *Unidad Educativa Vicente Mamallacta*, is also located in the Community Center. When the school was constructed, the community decided to use a traditional Kichwa architectural style. Students take Kichwa classes, but in Unified Kichwa, which is distinct from local dialects of the *Alto* and *Bajo Napo*. Several of the school’s students are not originally from the community, but temporarily live in the Community Center.

These *internados* are high school students, who come to Añangu because *Vicente Mamallacta* is one of the best schools in the region and specializes in teaching tourism, which is growing in popularity across Ecuador. This is an important step for students who want to study tourism at a higher education institute. The *internados* have to pay a small fee, but are provided with housing, food, and support for an internship position. Beyond the school, the Community Center also has soccer fields, a volleyball court, and a medical center, which is fully funded by the government (although frequently without needed supplies). Lastly, the Community Center is
also home to the Napo Cultural Center, one of Añangu’s two tourism projects. In the Community Center, one finds a high-end restaurant and luxury cabins for tourists. There is a cafeteria for ecolodge staff and dormitories for both staff and students who come from communities outside of Ecuador. There is also a maloca and huagra wasi, two traditional Kichwa-style buildings, which house the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization. Ultimately, the Community Center is an important gathering space, where community events, holidays, sports, and a livelihood dedicated to tourism intermix together.
Chapter 8
Tourism in Añangu

Throughout the 1990s, several individuals from Añangu were working at ecolodges outside of the community. In 1998, one of these community members proposed at a monthly assembly that the community should start its own turismo comunitario project. Initially, feelings were mixed. Among other concerns, it was well known that building a lodge would be expensive. Nonetheless, a small group decided to make the two-hour trek through the forest to Lake Añangucocha, where they began building cabins from local materials. Eventually, the community decided to fully support the project and managed to partner with NGOs, who helped fund the construction of the Napo Wildlife Center (NWC). According to a community leader, Añangu worked with three NGOs, Neblina Forest, Tropical Nature Conservation System, and EcoEcuador Foundation. Neblina Forest played a smaller role, while the EcoEcuador Foundation which was evidently a part of the Tropical Nature Conservation System, were fully involved in the project.

After the Napo Wildlife Center was opened, the community signed a contract with EcoEcuador, which gave them ownership of the lodge for twenty years, as a community-based tourism project. The community would receive benefits from the NWC’s and after the twenty-year mark, would take over ownership of the lodge. The relationship with EcoEcuador fell apart when it became evident that the NGO was mismanaging funds. According to a community member, when it was
clear that EcoEcuador was stealing money, workers from Añangu traveled to Quito and occupied the NGO’s main office. Ultimately, the Añangu Community won full rights to the lodge in 2007 after taking the NGO to court. Today, the community maintains full control over the tourism project.

Currently, the tourism project in Añangu includes the operation of two ecolodges, the Napo Wildlife Center and the Napo Cultural Center, and the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization. As discussed above, the Napo Wildlife Center opened in 2000 and has since become a world-renowned ecolodge. To get there, tourists must take a two-hour, motorized canoe ride from Coca City to the Añangu Community. Once in the community, they switch into a non-motorized canoe and paddle down the Añangu River, a small tributary of the Napo River. For all guests, including those who stay at the Napo Cultural Center, the canoe ride along the Añangu River is one of the most awestriking experiences they will have during their tourism “adventure.” It is not uncommon to see more than a dozen species of brightly colored birds, at least three to four different types of monkeys, baby anacondas, alligators, vibrantly blue morpho butterflies, and giant otters playfully gliding through the river. Eventually, the Añangu River opens up to Lake Añanguchoca, where the Napo Wildlife Center is located. The NWC is popular among birders because of its large observation tower, modeled after ancestral Kichwa architecture, which was built in the middle of the ecolodge. The tower also houses the lodge’s luxury restaurant and is a recreational space for visitors. All staff at the Napo Wildlife Center are

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25 Website for the Napo Wildlife Center: https://www.napowildlifecenter.com/
26 Website for the Napo Cultural Center: http://www.yasuniecolodge.travel/
27 Information from this section is pulled from interviews and interactions carried out during my field research. Details can also be found in the community’s self-published book, Historia de la Comunidad Kichwas or History of the Kichwa Añangu Community and the community’s personal website, http://www.comunidadanangu.org/ (Torres 2013).
males. For the most part, they are either from the Añangu Community or are from other Kichwa communities in Napo and Orellana Provinces.

In the Napo Wildlife Center’s earliest years, the Mamakunas from the Kichwa Añangu Community also worked at the Napo Wildlife Center. However, their work schedule at the NWC made it extremely difficult to raise their children. Mothers would be gone for two weeks at a time, leaving the oldest children to help with the younger ones. Even if they were to walk from the lodge every day, it would be a two to three hour trek, depending on where they lived along the Napo River. Eventually, the Mamakunas decided to leave their work and return to their homes. However, they still wanted to be involved in the tourism project. In 2010, they decided to organize the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization. Initially, they focused only on selling artisan crafts and were located at the boat dock, where tourists switched between canoes. The Kuri Muyu soon changed to a new location, where they built multiple, traditional-style houses dedicated to teaching different aspects of Kichwa history and culture. This created a more immersive, cultural experience for tourists and even became a popular excursion for other, regional ecolodges. This location, near one of several parrot-licks in Añangu, was also a burden on the Mamakunas. They would need to leave their homes before five or six a.m. each day, to travel to the Kuri Muyu. As of 2016, the Kuri Muyu was officially relocated to the Community Center.

Beyond its closer location, another incentive for moving the Kuri Muyu to the center of Añangu, was due to the community’s third project, the Napo Cultural Center, which is also located in the Community Center. The Napo
Cultural Center was originally opened in 2012 as the Yasuní Kichwa Ecolodge. The decision to build this lodge was supported by the *Mamakunas*, who wanted to not only create work opportunities closer to their homes, but to also have an ecolodge focused on cultural tourism. The tourist’s cabins and restaurant, which serves meals featuring local ingredients, are located in the Community Center. Guests are also welcome to play soccer or ecua-volley\textsuperscript{28} with lodge staff and Community Center. Prior to 2016, the lodge was staffed with guides from the Añangu Community, a few *Mamakunas*, and staff from other Kichwa communities. There have also been a limited number of staff who are Shiwar and Mestiço. However, after the *Kuri Muyu* was relocated to the Community Center, the *Mamakunas* became full time staff of the Napo Cultural Center. Today, *Mamakunas* make up the majority of the staff. They participate in nearly all staff positions, including guiding. I have been told that they are the only tourism project in the region who has female, Indigenous guides leading tours. The administration positions are still held by two men, but the long-term goal is to have *Mamakunas* fully running the lodge.

The community has several future initiatives which will become integral parts of the overall tourism project. For example, at the time of my research, there were plans underway to build a tourist cabin on top of a Kapok Tree, which is the tallest tree in the Amazon. It would be a sort of honeymoon suite, where guests would have their own personal chef and guide. There has also been discussion of building a bike zipline, where guests would have the opportunity to ride a bike over the rainforest’s dense canopy. Finally, a third major project the community is

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\textsuperscript{28} Ecua-volley, which is played across Ecuador, is a popular variant of volleyball. There are three players on each team, the net is higher than conventional indoor or beach volleyball, and a soccer ball is used in the place of a volleyball. For those who are not accustomed to playing, participation often results in bruised and swollen arms (personal experience). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z21Icdh06yo
considering is a luxury camping experience, modeled off of the Galapagos Safari Camp, in the Galapagos Islands.29

It is important to emphasize that community-ownership means that the project belongs to the whole community or all socios of the community. There are power hierarchies across employment positions, such as the general manager, the lodge administrators, guides, and so forth. Additionally, at the main office in Quito, there are only three employees who are socios from Añangu. The remainder of the staff are largely from Quito and have specialized skills related to running a tourism business, such as marketing or accounting. Nonetheless, all staff members working for the tourism project, ultimately work for the community. All major decisions regarding the tourism project are made during the monthly assembly meetings, which are only attended by socios. Furthermore, there are several socios from Añangu who have chosen to not participate or be employed by the tourism project. Nonetheless, all socios have a voice in discussing, debating, and voting on projects and issues related to tourism, among all other community-related topics.

Tourism has presented many opportunities to the Añangu Community, but this does not suggest that it has come without challenges. Some of these challenges are specific to tourism and community-owned tourism, while others, most wage earners can relate to. For example, few people enjoy coming back to work after vacation. Nonetheless, the remainder this thesis will consider what community-tourism looks like from the perspective of Añangu Community members and a foreign researcher, working and volunteering in the Añangu Community. After summarizing my methodologies, this thesis will consider examine how community-owned tourism has become a means of self-determination in the Kichwa Añangu Community.

29 Website for the Galapagos Safari Camp: http://www.galapagossafaricamp.com/
Chapter 9
In the “Field:” An Overview of Research Methods

The Kichwa Añangu Community is frequently visited by outsiders. During the lunchtime service at the Napo Cultural Center’s restaurant, I have seen more than eighty visitors, both foreign and Ecuadorian, indulging in typical Kichwa cuisine. Most of these visitors are in Añangu for a short period of time. The spend anywhere from one to six days admiring parrot clay licks, watching monkeys skillfully leaping across the tree branches, and learning intermittent bits of Kichwa language and culture. As mentioned above, there are also visitors who spend longer periods of time in Añangu. There are teachers and medical staff, funded by the government, who live in traditional Kichwa style homes at the far end of the Community Center. There is also the ecolodge staff who comes from outside the community. For two weeks periods, they will live in Añangu, eating at the cafeteria and sleeping in dorms, before leaving for a one week vacation. The community actively recruits volunteers to teach English and other capacity building trainings such as basic computer skills and excel. They encourage volunteers to develop their own research projects, in turn producing a project for the community, from the perspective of these outsiders.

I am one of these latter outsiders, a volunteer with experience teaching both English and basic computer skills, who also happens to be doing graduate work in anthropology. For a period of time, the community was partnering with a U.S.-based non-profit called Yasuní-Amazona, who was looking to fully fund student researchers in Añangu. I was the first recipient of a Yasuní Amazona scholarship. I left for Ecuador in May 2015 and had funding to stay in Añangu for four weeks. Initially, my plan was to research foodways in Añangu. In the book published the

[^30]: A look at my time with Yasuni-Amazona, under the section titled “Exploration of a Young Anthropologist:” http://www3.yasuni-amazona.org/scholar-reports/
community, *Historia de la Comunidad Kichwa Añangu*, it was mentioned that the community is attempting to become increasingly food-sovereign. My initial fifteen semi-structured interviews, completed in 2015, were largely guided by questions related to food. However, throughout these interviews, it became apparent that food production, importation, and the challenges in achieving food sovereignty were closely tied to tourism. Increasingly, tourism became my nexus of interest, given that so many aspects of life in Añangu were clearly tied to the practice of community-owned tourism.

Upon returning to the United States, I found myself repeatedly defending community-owned tourism in Añangu in my political ecology and political economy based courses, where tourism was routinely critiqued. I never expected to become a defender of tourism and I would still say that I take a critical approach to studying tourism. During this same period, I began to transcribe and code my interviews and fieldnotes. Although my questions and observations were in no way intended to focus on tourism, it still emerged as a key theme throughout my work. It became clear that tourism presented various challenges, but it was also promoted as doing a great deal of good for Añangu. Tourism in Añangu simply did not fit several of the critiques leveled at the tourism industry. For example, tourism is rightly criticized for excluding Indigenous peoples from their lands inside of state-created National Parks or for disrupting livelihood options (Robbins 2012, Vásquez-León 2012). To complicate matters more, I was struck by the United Nation’s World Tourism Organization’s statistics regarding the ubiquity of international tourism. Ultimately, it became hard to not focus on the question of tourism in Añangu. I wanted to know why the community decided to become involved in tourism and whether it actually provided the “opportunities” I had been exposed to during my first trip.
I left for my second trip to Añangu in late May 2016. This time I would be staying three months, again teaching while completing my research. Interestingly, teaching turned into one of my most important tools in the development of my ethnographic research. By being in a classroom setting, I was able to develop a rapport with community members, ecolodge staff, and high school students, rather than being the resident foreigner (rancia in Kichwa), awkwardly taking notes and asking for interviews. Through the classroom, I was able to develop relationships based on reciprocity. From my perspective, I was in Añangu as a researcher, how from the community’s perspective, my primary role was teaching. In fact, all of the high schoolers simply called me “teacher” (in English). As a result of teaching, I was able to fulfill a role desired by the community. In attempting to produce applied anthropology, it is important to identify multiple avenues for contributing to community partners, who share with the researcher so much of their knowledge and time. I also want to note that before beginning my research in both 2015 and 2016, I was asked by the community to sign a contract. This contract identified the roles, obligations, and commitments I was making to the community, in addition to the rules I needed to follow. Having community-designed contracts that specifically identify the relationship between “researchers” (or volunteers) and those being “researched” (or students) is an important step in producing ethically-grounded and community-supported research.

On a final note about teaching, being in the classroom was an incredible ethnographic learning experience for me. By and large, I was shaping my English classes around working in tourism. This required my students to work with me while developing lesson plans which would be useful for their work. Additionally, because I teach conversational English, student answers
related to local tourism, the Añangu Community, or Kichwa culture more broadly, allowed me to develop better and more informed questions during my interviews and general conversations.

Throughout the summer of 2016, I again conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews, giving me a total of thirty over both summers. In both 2015 and 2016 the majority of my interviews were individual, however, I also conducted three group interviews with two to three participants. With the exemption of one impromptu interview over a meal, each of these interviews were recorder with permission from the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. Although Spanish is not my first language, I grew up speaking Spanish as a participant in a Spanish Immersion program. I have also lived in South American for three years.

The bulk of my interviews are with community members who work for the tourism project and ecolodge staff from communities outside of Añangu. I was particularly interested in interviewing ecolodge staff who hope to begin *turismo comunitario* projects in their own communities. Overall, I have more interviews with men than women, because during the first summer of my field research, the *Kuri Muyu* was located twenty minutes away from the Community Center by motorized canoe. While I visited the *Kuri Muyu* on three occasions during my initial visit, the *Mamakunas* were always working during this time. Also, once they returned from the *Kuri Muyu*, they would usually go home to be with their children, rather than spend time in the Community Center. There were important exceptions to this rule, for example, when soccer games needed to be played. I also purposefully interviewed several individuals who are
not employed by the tourism project. This includes medical staff, a volunteer and a visiting intern.

It is important to note that my research was largely conducted at the Napo Cultural Center, located in the Community Center. It was here that I engaged in sociocultural anthropology’s bread-and-butter form of data collection, participant observation. I lived in the same homes as the teachers and medical staff. During the first visit, I shared a room with a volunteer, a fellow graduate student from Ecuador. In 2016, I lived with Añangu’s doctor, who was completing a follow-up in Añangu to her rural year of service. After an early breakfast, I would spend most mornings lesson planning and teaching. When the kitchen and restaurant staff were too busy for English classes, which was often, I would join tourists at the *Kuri Muyu*, where the *Mamakunas* would guide guests through their key “cultural” experience while in Añangu. During the first summer, most of my afternoons were spent with a group of high school students, who voluntarily came to English classes after their school day let out. In 2016, I began working with the *Mamakunas* in the afternoons, intermixing English and computer courses. Our classes were frequently canceled as a result of tourist visiting the *Kuri Muyu* in the afternoon. Generally speaking, I went to the *Kuri Muyu* five to six times a week, because each visit presented a new learning experience. I also genuinely enjoyed spending time with the *Mamakunas*, while practicing my uncoordinated Kichwa dance skills.

My “normal” schedule, was only followed perhaps three to five days a week. I frequently was able to join tourists for their various ecotourism excursions. I have probably spent more than twenty hours patiently waiting to see parakeets descend upon a clay lick. I have also climbed the Añangu’s various observation towers on dozens of occasions and have hiked and re-hiked many of the beautiful trails leading into the dense forest from the Community Center. On two separate
occasions, when bilingual guides were needed, I filled in as an interpreter for local guides. I also had the opportunity to participate in community events. I sang in English with a group of high schoolers for a mother’s day celebration, learned how to make chicha, and joined mingas, or communal work sessions. I also helped harvest food for tourists, served as a model for a video being produced by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism, and played both soccer and ecuavolley as much as possible, even when a pending knee surgery hindered my mobility in 2016. Finally, I had the opportunity to visit the Napo Wildlife Center (NWC) on two occasions. On one of these trips, I went as an interpreter for a group of filmmakers working for the community. For the other visit, I was sent as a photographer, to create a photo archive for the community, documenting each type of plant species found around the lodge. During this time I was able to converse with the former manager of the ecologide and interact with staff. Outside of the NWC, I routinely interacted with guides who worked at the lodge. Those from the community would often visit the Community Center on their days off to play sports. Furthermore, nearly every day, guests from the NWC would visit the Napo Cultural Center, giving me a chance to chat with guides. Lastly, I also had the opportunity to visit the main office in Quito on three occasions. I was able to meet much of the staff, both at the office and during visits to the Añangu Community.

From the “observational” standpoint, I used various mediums to record data. I had notebooks, which served for both daily note keeping and as an ongoing Kichwa dictionary. I also relied heavily on my smartphone and tablet for note taking and audio and visual recordings. I would expand and add details to my notes each evening. I also had permission to take photos and record video. My photos have been turned over to the community, several of which have been used for promotional purposes on Facebook. I am also creating a short video for the community
highlighting my experience. Given that the community hires professional videographers, my short video is simply intended to be a recording of various experiences through my eyes.

Finally, as a caveat before jumping into the bulk of the ethnographic case study, I want to briefly consider my positionality as an outside researcher visiting Añangu and the limitations of my research. This work being presented is framed around my experiences in the Kichwa Añangu Community. Much of the ethnographic details comes from my personal observations and experiences. I intentionally use transcriptions from my interviews as a way of including voice from the Añangu Community. I also recognize that there is great diversity and differentiating relationships to tourism in Añangu. I did not have the opportunity to interview community members who are not participating in the tourism project, due to the fact that I had almost no interaction with these community members. I was also not able to interview any of the *Rukumamas* (grandmothers) who participate in the tourism project, because their Spanish is limited and my Kichwa is poor. Nonetheless, I do hope that my representation of tourism in Añangu does justice to the experiences of the many individuals I was able to befriend. I also did not interview tourists. Although I did have extensive interaction and conversations with tourists, in my contract, I was not given explicit permission by the community to do interviews, largely because they did not want to interfere with the guests’ experience in Añangu.
Chapter 10
Livelihood and Tourism

The Petroleum Conundrum

After a tearful goodbye in Añangu on the final day of my fieldwork, I had several hours to pass in Coca City before departing on my late afternoon flight. While tourists pour into Coca daily, they generally take off on motorized canoes headed into the “true” Amazon, the “pristine” Amazon, within hours of arriving in this Amazonian city built around the petroleum industry. Rather than aimlessly wandering around Coca with my oversized backpacks, I was fortunate that a couple of friends were in Coca with me, enjoying their days off from work at a local ecolodge. By the late morning, we managed to wander into a bakery which sold beers and was showing U.S. Olympics volleyball, much to my excitement as a former volleyball player. Out of nowhere, my friend Victor surprised us by announcing that he would be quitting his job at the ecolodge he worked at. He had just interview with a petroleum company, who was willing to pay him $800 monthly to work at a drill site. At the ecolodge, he was making Ecuador’s minimum wage, $366 a month. While the new job had the same work schedule, fourteen days on, seven days off, he would have free time in the evenings. In the ecolodge industry, the workday often does not end until the tourists are in their cabins with their lights turned off.

As the conversation continued, Raúl, an eco-tour guide from Quito, encouraged Victor to think about all of the downsides of working in the petroleum industry, but Victor stood firm. While listening to the back and forth, I did not know what advice to offer. The “environmentalist” in me wanted to advocate that working in petroleum would cause long-term damage to the environment and his body, but I also knew that Victor needed money. His

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31 Coca City’s official name is Puerto Francisco de Orellana. It is the capital of Orellana Province.
intentions were not to hurt the environment, but he needed to save money to attend university. In fact, his plan is to study environmental engineering or environmental studies.

Victor’s case provides insight into the messy livelihood conflicts individuals frequently confront. Today, much of the world’s population is connected to modern globalization and the neoliberal wave of capitalism, oftentimes creating dependence on the capital and commodity-oriented market economy (Robinson 2003, Harvey 2005). While money may physically be nothing more than paper or digits in a computer system, the value we have assigned to it shapes our lives in infinite forms. Everything from our daily subsistence, employment, access to material resources and capital, environmental management, and education are influenced by our economic systems and the global flow of capital. Some of us, including myself, have great flexibility in choosing a career that aligns with both our need for income and with our moral and ethical values. However, assemblages of factors including socioenvironmental contexts and historical and structural inequities, often merge to make more accessible certain job opportunities, while limiting access to others. In the case of Victor, petroleum seemed like the best opportunity to make enough money to be able to leave his home for school.

Overall, it was clear that both Raúl and I were resisting Victor’s decision to work for the petroleum industry (although I continued to hesitantly keep my mouth shut). Petroleum extraction is an easy target to criticize. There is substantial evidence, including academic, documented, and ethnographic, which emphasizes the dangers petroleum extraction presents to workers, local communities, and the environment. A clear example of this is the case of the

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32 I should also clarify here that Raúl and I come from both urban and economically privileged backgrounds, whereas Victor comes from a small Kichwa Community near Tena City in Napo Province. For a number of contextual reasons, attributable largely to certain forms of economic and resource privilege, Raúl and I are unlikely to be faced with a dilemma, where we might have to consider choosing between environmental activism and livelihood needs.
Cofán and other Indigenous peoples in northern Ecuador, who have literally been dying on their ancestral lands due to decades of oil contamination by Texaco in the 20th century (Cepek 2012, Valdivia 2007). Despite years of lawsuits and battles against Chevron-Texaco, Cepek notes that even some Cofán are willing to work for the petroleum industry. It both pays well and there is a feeling that if one “cannot stop oil production, they at least should get something for the inevitable damage” (Cepek 2012, 407). Petroleum represents a conundrum for many Indigenous peoples living in Ecuador’s Amazon. Despite the suffered proof of its harms, people need and want to be able to support themselves economically.

Implicit in Raúl’s and my critique of Victor’s decision is a suggestion that working in tourism is a better alternative to working in petroleum. However, is this a legitimate suggestion, especially in Victor’s case, where wages are low and hours are long? It is at this point that we can turn to look at the relationship between tourism and livelihood and the Añangu specifically. While I will return to the environmental question in the next section, it is important to reemphasize that the Añangu Community does have petroleum under their soil. Añangu Community members would financially benefit from either leaving the community to work for petroleum companies or by leasing the rights to their land to a petroleum company (which would require approval from the Ecuadorian government). However, they have strategically chosen tourism as their source of employment and income. Why is this?

Keeping the Kids Home

In the summer of 2016, I taught to two high schoolers who during their summer vacation, wanted to take an extra English class. At 11:00 am each morning, just before lunch, we met in the staff cafeteria to engage in a conservational-style English class. Lucas, who had been my student
in both 2015 and 2016, is probably the most proficient English speaker in his high school. He is shy, but he loves to practice. One day, I asked him, “Lucas, what do you want to study in university?” Without a hesitation, he confidently said he wanted to study “management.” He then told me that when he finished, he wanted to become Napo Cultural Center’s administrator. I had a similar conversation with an ecolodge staff member from the community. Felipe, who graduated from high school just after I left Añangu in 2015, had officially become a socio of Añangu and worked between both of the community’s ecolodges on construction projects and “various services.” One evening, him and another socio of the community, turned up to my English class for the first time. Felipe stayed after class to continuing practicing. Even on his vacation, he would walk along the muddy trail at night just to come to English class. Eventually, he told me that he wanted to go to guiding school. His goal was to return to the community and become one of the few, prestigious bilingual guides from the Añangu Community.

The ambition of these two young men is emblematic of a key goal embedded in the tourism project, the desire to keep children in Añangu as they become adults. Hector a guide and community leader explained to me:

“We have talked about this with the tourists, our project, our dream of maintaining our culture. Right? To not lose our culture, because it is so important. We are in this project, the project of the community to keep our children here, that way our children do not go to the West to pick up other customs. We teach them, now, us as parents, teach our children our customs, from the little that we know, we teach them.”

33 In Spanish: “Con las turistas hemos hablado sobre esto, nuestro proyecto, nuestro sueño de mantener nuestro cultura. ¿No? No perder nuestra cultura porque es tan importante. estamos ese proyecto, el proyecto de la comunidad es mantener a nuestros hijos aquí, para que de ese manera, nuestros hijos no salguen hacia afuera al occidente a coger otros costumbres. Nosotros enseñarlos, ahorita nosotros como padres, enseñar a nuestros hijos nuestros costumbres, de lo poco que sabemos, enseñarlos.”
When Hector says the “West,” he is not referencing the United States or Europe. He is talking about Coca City, Tena, Quito, Guayaquil or any other Ecuadorian city. The “West” represents the opposite of Kichwa, it represents the loss of Kichwa-ness. The West is urban, it is disconnected from the land, from the forest, Kichwa culture, and a sense of home. Tourism creates an opportunity for youth to see a future in Añangu, where they too will be able to contribute to the tourism project. The community makes an explicit effort to encourage its youth to return to Añangu. In the school, all high school or colegio students study tourism. The community has chosen this career path to prepare their youth for working in tourism and pursuing higher education degrees focused on tourism. While in high school, students are intimately exposed to the tourism project. It only takes a few minutes to walk between the school and ecolodge restaurant. Tourists will also frequently visit the school. They have the opportunity to interact with students, hear them sing the national anthem in Kichwa, and will often bring school supplies as donations. The experience of everyday life is intentionally embedded in the ecotourism experience at the Napo Cultural Center.

Beyond interacting with tourists and visiting both the Napo Wildlife and Napo Cultural Centers, all high school students participate in an internship. After their third year of high school, students will be sent off to different tourism projects throughout the Bajo Napo region. Some will stay in Añangu, working at one of the two lodges, while others will go off to hotels and other ecolodges. An excited few will end up on the Manatee Amazon Explorer Cruise, a much coveted cruise traversing along the Napo River. Upon graduating, students from Añangu can receive support from the community to continue their education. While it is recognized that not all students will return or be interested in tourism, the hope is that several will come back with the skills to carry forward the tourism project. Matías, a community socio who is only his mid-
20s, told me “we are young, over time, we could leave it, but no, not that, we have to work to continue with community tourism.”

Beyond the dedication of young people, tourism requires continued market demand. People have to be willing to come to Añangu. Nonetheless, the youth of the future are growing up in a world where their parents both work in tourism and encourage them to someday study tourism. For example, I asked Lucas, a young man getting ready to graduate from high school what he wanted to do when he finished. He told me that he wanted to become a chef. I excitedly asked if he was going to attend culinary school, a distant dream of mine. He told me that he was not, his parents wanted him to study tourism. His disappointment is not universal, but not uncommon either. Another friend, Juan, is from a Kichwa community near Tena. Juan had begun university studying tourism, but decide to leave to get more practical experience and English language skills. In the long term, Juan intends to not only return to his studies, but start his own turismo comunitario project in his community.

I often played soccer with children in the late afternoon. On one of these days, as the sun was setting over the Napo River, a canoe arrived, full of high schoolers returning from a day-long field trip. As the teenagers passed by, the kids I was playing with began yelling “Bienvenidos a mi comunidad,”

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34 Original text in Spanish: “Nosotros somos jóvenes, con tiempo, de ganas podemos dejarlo. Pero no, no es eso, tenemos que trabajar para continuar con el turismo comunitario”
“Bienvenidos a la Comunidad Añangu,” or “Welcome to my community,” “Welcome to the Añangu Community.” Añangu’s youth are growing up in a world, where it is normal for outsiders to come into their community, and in some cases, even into their homes. It is normal for strangers to take photos of them and bring them gifts in the middle of their school days. They are no longer impressed by drones flying above, simply because so many tourists have now brought them. Their Indigeneity, their history, their culture, and their language are all attractions that people are willing to pay money to experience. These young people live in a world where tourism is a pervasive part of their everyday lives. How this will shape them as they become adults is yet to be seen.

Family Income

Beyond keeping youth home, tourism as a means of livelihood is directly connected to financial incentives. While it recognized that tourism does not pay as well as the petroleum companies, it nonetheless provides an income at both the individual and community level. From an individual or family standpoint, having access to money provides a means for bringing in goods from the “outside.” I will discuss this in greater depth in the following section, but as previously mentioned, the community has prohibited all hunting and restricted the extraction of resources, such as timber. For this reason, families are dependent on purchasing foods and materials from other areas. On Saturdays, parents who are not working will take off in their
canoes, headed to the *Feriado de Pompeya*. There, they can buy food, both “Western” and from the region, and goods they might need for their homes. In fact, several families are beginning to build cement homes, which requires purchasing a substantial amount of materials from larger cities. There are ecologically significant reasons for building these cement homes. In the introduction to this thesis, I mentioned that floods had washed away land from the Añangu Community. Given that all Añangu Community members live along the Napo River, this is a problem. When there are heavy rains up river, Añangu frequently becomes flooded. Land continues to disappear into the river and several homes, although on stilts, do not escape invasion from the rushing water. During one of these large floods in 2016, I was talking with an administrator as we watched the water slowly rise up the restaurant stairs. He told me that he was really worried, his wife and young son were at home and during the previous flood, when the house’s floor had been completely submerged in the water. While concrete homes may not prevent flooding, they are resilient to damage. Of course, this does not change the reality that land continues to erode with each flood.

In 2016, family incomes were substantially augmented once *Mamakunas* began working at the Napo Cultural Ecolodge. When the *Kuri Muyu* was located at the bock dock and parakeet lick, the *Mamakuna*’s income came only from tips, artisan crafts sale, and the minimal entrance fee to the *Kuri Muyu* for outside lodges. The community is proud to now have the *Mamakunas*
under formal employment contracts. When the Napo Cultural Center was originally built in 2012, it was advertised as the “Mamakunas” ecolodge. However, tourists would generally not encounter the Mamakunas until their second day, when they visited the Kuri Muyu. At its previous location, the Kuri Muyu was slightly larger than it currently is. In addition to having the *huagra wasi* and the *maloca*, it also had a house dedicated to demonstrating hunting weapons, such as blowguns and traps, which was popular among tourist. However, the advantages of the previous location are outweighed by having the Mamakunas working at the Napo Cultural Center. Not only have many family incomes doubled, but the Mamakunas also enjoy being closer to their homes. Before the school day began, I would watch the Mamakunas strolling into the community, holding the hands of their young children before they ran off to school. At lunch time, the Mamakunas ate in the cafeteria, with all of the students and other ecolodge staff. While the teenagers would congregate in their circles, younger children were often happy to join their mothers. In 2016, I often spent my afternoons either playing soccer with the Mamakunas or sitting around laughing and joking with them, as we watched men slide across the muddy soccer fields. Once the games finished, the Mamakunas could start their long trek home, with their oldest children as company.

**Community Projects**

When the Napo River is not too low, tourists disembark from their canoe at the edge of the Community Center. The first building they see are the barracks which formerly housed the teachers and doctors. In all likelihood, these barracks will soon suffer the fate of a former watch tower, as the land sustaining them slowly disappears into the river. As they begin to walk along what is usually a muddy path, beyond two soccer fields they will see five buildings, which
appear to be constructed in a “traditional” or Indigenous style. They will later learn that this is the school. They will also pass a couple of homes along the river’s edge, homes that belong to teachers. Adjacent to these are more barrack style buildings. These are dormitories which house the internados who come to Añangu to study tourism at the Unidad Educativa Vicente Mamallacta. In the distance, they might notice a strange looking tower. This tower is pulling and filtering water from the ground, which will be pumped to their rooms for their hot showers and will be re-filtered, so that they can drink local water. As they round the corner towards the restaurant, they will see a series of concrete buildings. Behind one of the doors, occluded from their view, is a computer lab, donated by the state. It no longer has internet, due to a lack of state funding. At the second door, which is always open during the day, they may notice individuals walking around in white lab coats and scrubs. These are the doctors, nurses, and dentists sent by the state for a year of rural service. Through the last door, they may notice adults speaking with students or typing away on laptops. This is the teachers’ office, where students frequently chat with their educators after class. Finally, they will have arrived at the restaurant, where they will be handed a moist washcloth and a glass of sweetened guayusa tea.

The Kichwa Añangu Community has initiated several projects which are intimately connected to tourism. For example, one socio explained to me that the community has used the success of the tourism projects to help leverage for a better school and medical center. Previously, the school used to be located in the series of concrete buildings adjacent to the
restaurant. However, by showing the community was willing to invest in the quality of its school and teachers, Añangu received funding to build the new school. Also, the manager of the tourism project was able to request better medical staff, given that both domestic and foreign tourists would be frequently visiting the community. Clearly, we can critique the fact that services were made available only after tourism arrived in the community. Nonetheless, it does not change the tangible reality that tourism served as a medium for receiving improved services. In Ecuador and across the globe, access to state funding and services is rarely a matter of equal opportunity.

In a similar vein, the community is striving to become increasingly energy independent. Currently, households have small solar panels, but the Community Center and both ecolodges are largely dependent on diesel-run generators. If you are paying careful attention, amid the songs of birds and insects, from the restaurant you can hear a faint, mechanical humming in the distance. If you are a teacher or medical staff resting in your room after a large lunch, the humming will be more of a roar, which one gradually becomes accustomed to and rarely complains about. Without the roar coming from the diesel generator, there is almost no electricity. With time, the community hopes to rely less on the generator. In fact, adjacent to my room were a series of solar panels, donated by both the United States and British embassies in Ecuador. The contribution from the British Embassy is providing 24-hour electricity to the casa comunal or community house, the teacher’s office, medical center, and the teacher’s rooms. Eventually, the community hopes that the entire Community Center can be run on solar panels.
The Añangu have other energy-based goals. As a tourist, when you are given your “community tour,” you are taken towards a large, white cistern, which seems strangely out of place amid the surrounding trees. This is the community’s biodigester, donated by the state’s Ministry of Industries and Productivity, which sees the community as a model of sustainability (Ministerio de Industrias y Productividad 2013). The idea behind the biodigester, is that the community will be able to use locally produced biogas for cooking in both the cafeteria and restaurant. Unfortunately, they have encountered difficulties in channeling the biogas to the cafeteria. Nonetheless, the biodigester remains a work in progress, amid the Añangu’s larger energy goals. For example, next to the biodigester is a large scale composting project. The compost can be used at the community garden, which is managed by students and Mamakunas. Over the long-term, the community garden project, which involves a small nursery and a large greenhouse, is intended to provide locally grown foods to the tourist restaurant and staff cafeteria.

How are each of these community projects tied to tourism? According to my conversations, the community’s tourism project has attracted significant attention from the Ecuadorian government. During my time in the field, we were visited by firefighters for Coca
City, who were helping the community develop an evacuation plan for tourists and staff. We also had several visits from the Ministry of the Environment (MAE). On some visits, they participated in community *mingas*, or communal work gatherings, collecting invasive snails. They also came and filmed a video, emphasizing the strong relationship between MAE and the community. If it is ever released, one of the leading actresses, an anthropologist from the University of Arizona, is featured as a photo-taking tourist. In an interview between MAE and the President of the community, the interviewer repeatedly encouraged the President to list the ways that MAE has served Añangu.

Tourists have also made direct contributions to the community, beyond their payment and tips. For example, in 2015, I was made aware that a special group would be visiting the community. I was asked to cancel my English classes and be the official photographer for the four-day visit. This particular trip was intended to be a retreat for “life coaches,” hosted by SpryteLorianoGlobal. The Napo Cultural Center truly went out of its way to welcome the nearly forty guests, which included a large camera crew, who would be making a short film about the trip.

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35 The leaders of this trip were Spryte Loriano and José Rafael Bejarano, a reiki healer and musician from Mexico. Sadly, in September of 2015, only months after he left Añangu, Rafael was killed by the Egyptian military when they bombed a convoy of Mexican tourists, mistaking them for terrorist. Rafael was only in the Añangu Community for four days, but he left an impression on everyone he encountered. While I was aware of the attack prior to my return to Añangu, I was shocked and saddened to learn that Rafael was among the victims when I returned to Añangu in 2016. ([http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/11862925/Egyptian-forces-accidentally-attack-Mexican-tourist-convoy-killing-12.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/11862925/Egyptian-forces-accidentally-attack-Mexican-tourist-convoy-killing-12.html))
The Mamakunas, who were not yet working in the Community Center, left the Kuri Muyu early for a special presentation. When they arrived at the restaurant, it had already been decorated with banana leaves and flowers. The kitchen was abuzz with the sounds of sizzling white cacao seeds and grubs. The Mamakunas began to weave headbands from paja toquilla, which they would gift to the tourists. When the group finally arrived, the Mamakunas hid away, in preparation for a special dance presentation. Why was this group special? They were bringing forty Sawyer water filters, which would be donated to the community. During a follow-up visit in 2016, the group brought water filters for every household and large water containers. Every family now has access to clean water, a feat that the Ecuadorian government has not been able to provide.

Ultimately, tourism is integral to each of the Añangu’s projects. Not only does it allow the community to initiate projects, such as the community garden, but it also attracts services and donations from the state, outside organizations, and tourists. Community-owned tourism or turismo comunitario provides an important discursive narrative, which attracts these outside contributions. The community is able to publicly present itself as a protector of the Amazon Rainforest and Kichwa Culture.

The Yasuní Kichwa Ecolodge

When I first traveled to the Kichwa Añangu Community, the Napo Cultural Center was called the Yasuní Kichwa Ecolodge (YKE). For short, everyone simply called it “Yasuní.” Even outside of Añangu, friends and acquaintances who guided at other lodges referred to the YKE as Yasuní. Not surprisingly, the Yasuní National Park is also frequently called Yasuní. Yasuní, as a
national park, has received global recognition among environmentalist, as a result of the
aforementioned Yasuní-ITT Initiative. During my second week in the field in 2015, the YKE’s
manager announced that the lodge would be changing its name to the Napo Cultural Center. He
explained that the intention was to create a more explicit connection between the Napo Wildlife
Center and the Napo Cultural Center. Outsiders would be able to quickly grasp that these lodges
were intimately connected through their similar names. In my mind, the name switch made
perfect since. The nearly identical titles would be great for marketing. However, rumors began to
circulate that there was another underlying reason behind the name change. One guide, Alex,
explained to me that when people hear “Yasuní,” they think about petroleum, not tourism. I find
this discursive switch intriguing. Between the two lodge titles, the community now highlights
“wildlife” and “culture.” It feels like an explicit attempt to reorient how the Yasuní National Park
is viewed from outside. While it is always celebrated for its biodiversity, it also should not be
reduced to ecological destruction and petroleum. The Añangu’s livelihood is tied to tourism.
They want outsiders to also see the park as a space of cultural and environmental richness.
Chapter 11
Environmental Stewardship and the Ecotourism Story
“For our Children”

During an interview I witnessed with the Ministry of the Environment, Tómas emphasized that the Añangu Community’s “commitment is to care for the forest and the fauna, flora and fauna, and that is what we are doing, so that any visitor who comes, can feel it, can believe it, and can see that they feel the truth, that we are the first to be managing [the forest].” Tómas is not exaggerating, even before you arrive to Añangu, you learn about the community’s dedication to conserving the rainforest. It takes two hours to travel to Añangu by motorized canoe from Coca City. The majority of the canoe ride is spent looking at the seemingly infinite tree line, towering Kapok trees, and occasional home. However, as the canoe approaches the community of El Descanso, a little over an hour into the trip, a fire becomes visible in the distance. It initially seems to be burning in the air, but as the canoe approaches, it becomes clear that it is a gas flare, shooting from two gas stacks protruding from the ground. Cameras are instantly grabbed, as the canoe begins to slow down. Guides will explain that the flares kill millions of insects every night and that they are contaminating the very air we breathe. They will

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36 In Spanish: “El compromiso nuestro es cuidar el bosque y la fauna, flora y fauna y eso es lo que nosotros estamos haciendo. Para que cualquier visitante venga, lo sienta, que crea, y vea que siente la verdad, que somos los primeros que están manejando [el bosque].”
explain that the Añangu Community, who deeply care about the Amazon’s wellbeing, does not ever intend to have gas flares.

Repeatedly, tourists will learn that the Añangu are trying to conserve and protect their ecosystem. They will be told that “we do not want to contaminate our land, our rivers, our air, our forest; we want to leave our children with a good inheritance.” Youth are again an important part of the story. Conserving the environment now, means that the Añangu of the future will have a forest which has not been destroyed by ranching, palm plantations, mass agriculture, or petroleum extraction. Trosper proposes that for many Indigenous peoples, it is common to consider the wellbeing not only of today’s generation, but of the seventh to come.

He explains that “past human generations left us a legacy, and we have a duty pass that legacy to our great-grandchildren and beyond, as far as the seventh generation” (R. Trosper 1995, 67). This is echoed by Oren Lyons, an Iroquois leader he quotes, who says that “we are looking ahead […] to make sure and to make every decision that we make relate to the welfare and well-being of the seventh to come” (R. Trosper 1995). The Añangu are undoubtedly engaged in a similar practice. Their goal is not only to care for the wellbeing of their environment now, but to do it for their children, grandchild, and the future generations who will someday inherit Añangu.

The Amazon Rainforest is suffering deforestation at devastating rates. Lands are repurposed for mass agriculture, palm production, and ranching. Trees are leveled where cities emerge. Oil spills contaminate water systems and lands, bringing disease and death. Sport

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37 In Spanish: “No queremos contaminar nuestra tierra, nuestros ríos, nuestro aire, nuestro bosque, dejar una buena herencia para nuestros hijos.”
hunting has decimated large game populations. Amid this destruction, ecotourism is seen as an alternative. Ecotourism in Añangu is seen as a way to save the land, so that future generations will be able to live as Sacha Runa or people of the forest.

A Changing Relationship with the Environment

Dedicating community livelihood to ecotourism undoubtedly requires a particular relationship with the environment. If your goal is to “sell nature,” then it is necessary to have a product that is worth selling. An immersive experience of nature is being purchased and oftentimes, this experience must be exceptional given the growing abundance of ecotourism projects worldwide (Honey 2008). In the case of Añangu, this is conflated by the fact that their tours are not cheap. Given that community must pay its staff, upkeep its lodges, and use money to support community projects, one will not find a cheap trip to Añangu (although they will have occasional promotions for Ecuadorian tourists). This is one of the challenges of community-owned tourism, how does the community possibly afford to keep the project running?

Before tourism, large swaths of land in Añangu were dedicated to agriculture. Today, tourists will do hikes through these lands, which guides characterize in ecological terms as “secondary forest.” Like tourism, selling crops is a difficult means of livelihood. Alvaro, an ecolodge staff member from a nearby Kichwa community, told me that his community’s income is largely agricultural-based. In 2015, he told me that they would receive 80 cents to $1 for every pound of cocoa (coco) and only $23 for a centner or quintal (approximately 110 lbs.) of coffee. This sort of income is not enough for the community. This is why they too are trying to begin a community-owned tourism project. Today, they are already building the restaurant for their future lodge.
The Añangu Community also has the option of turning to petroleum. Partnering with the government, they could most likely lease rights to their own land. Alternatively, community members could work for the petroleum companies elsewhere. Tomás explained to me:

“Right now, it’s really difficult to find work, well there’s petroleum [...] A lot of people were given work in petroleum. I know they earn well, they are paid well, but they don’t pay attention to the future, something is going to happen. It’s like what happened now. It fell, petroleum [prices] went down and people were left without work. On the one hand, tourism does not [go down]. Tourism has its limit, but it doesn’t have as much impact.”

During my 2016 fieldwork, global oil prices had plummeted (K. Russell 2016), which had a grave impact on Ecuador’s economy. Not only was the country attempting to recover from a devastating earthquake, but petroleum is the small country’s number one export industry. In the eyes of Tomás, petroleum represented both economic and environmental insecurity. Tourism is certainly plagued by vulnerabilities, but at the very least it does not have the environmental impact. Tomás sees tourism as only growing in the future, which is why he is excited about the expansion of tourism projects in Añangu. Tourism is a livelihood which cares for the environment, while petroleum is volatile and finite industry which destroys Pachamama or Mother Nature.

In the case of the Añangu Community, notions of environmental stewardship, sustainability, or conservation do not uphold myths of pristine nature, devoid of human presence. The Amazon has been inhabited for millennia. In fact, in a recent archaeological study, Clement et al. estimate that in 1492, there may have been as many as eight million people living

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38 In Spanish: “Ahorita es bien difícil encontrar un trabajo, he bueno petrolera […] Mucha gente les dio trabajar en petrolera. Yo sé que ganan bien, pagan bien, pero ellos no se dan cuenta que para el futuro, va a pasar algo. Es como paso ahorita, cayo, bajo el petróleo y la gente sin trabajo. Entonces, En cambio el turismo no. El turismo debe tener un límite también igual, para no hacer demasiado impacto.”
throughout the Amazon Rainforest. Indigenous peoples were actively reshaping the Amazon through agriculture, forest management, the presence of complex societies, and migration for thousands of years (Clement, et al. 2015). Today, the Napo Cultural Center is emblematic of the Amazon’s thoroughly human and cultural environment. Tourists will see that the Añangu Community does not simply blend into the density of the forest, but exercises agency in the ongoing reshaping of their environment. The community has homes, a school, a medical center, hiking paths, a water tower, a greenhouse, small farms, and observation towers among its many structures. They also created community-wide rules which govern how they manage their land, their commons. Establishing these rules, rules that govern forest management dedicated to ecotourism, has not come without its challenges.

One sunny afternoon, after preparing for my English class with the Mamakunas, one of the lodge managers found me wandering in search of my students. Like so many afternoons, he apologetically told me, “Sarita, we have to cancel class today.” Normally this meant that tourists would be visiting the Kuri Muyu, but that afternoon was different, the Mamakunas were making chicha for the staff. The rainy season had just passed and everyone needed a little more energy working under the unrelenting sun. Chicha is a pre-Colombian drink made from differing ingredients across Latin America. In Peru, I have had chicha morada and chicha de jora, both made from corn, and chicha de mani, made from peanuts. Throughout the Ecuadorian Amazon, chicha is made from cassava or yuca in Spanish. In Kichwa, chicha is called asua. According to the Mamakunas, their ancestors would drink chicha throughout the whole day. Mamakunas would drink it while working on the chacra or farm. The men would carry it with them into the forest. Chicha would give them energy, substituting for food as they farmed and hunted.
Making *chicha* is a *warmis* job, a job for women. If fact, the *Mamakunas* told me that if *chicha* turns out poorly, they call it *asuakari* or man’s *chicha*, implying that a man must have made that *chicha*. The *Mamakunas* bring *chicha* to work every day. They will always share with each other, their children, and will often extend an invitation out to the men. Tourists will also try *chicha* when they visit they *Kuri Muyu*. It generally looks like milk, but has a strong smell and unique, slightly sweet taste. You can smell *chicha*’s sweet scent long before you see it being served. The *chicha* shared with tourists is *chicha dulce* or sweet *chicha*. While traditional *chicha* was fermented with saliva, for the tourist *chicha* is made with sweet potatoes. This *chicha* will lose its sweetness as it ferments, but tourists are generally giben *chicha* that had been made within the last few days. This is the same *chicha* they give to *wawas* or kids.

That sunny afternoon, when I was told me my class was canceled, would be my first attempt at making *chicha*. I joined the *Mamakunas* at Katalina’s house. We drank copious amounts of Katalina’s *chicha* as we patiently waited for the cassava to boil. Once the cassava was soft, we moved it into a wooden tub, where we mashed it until it took on a mashed potato-like texture. As I squatted next to the tub with several *Mamakunas*, the community’s dentist walked into the house, curious about the *chicha* making process. The *Mamakunas* soon began to joke that we were making this *chicha* for my wedding with the dentist. *Warmis* are always in charge of making the *chicha* for a wedding ceremony, but the men have responsibilities too.
They told the dentist that he needed to hunt a *huangana* or peccary if he wanted my hand in marriage.

Had the *Mamakunas* not been joking, the dentist would have been confronted with several distinct problems. First of all, he is a city kid from Quito who has never hunted in his life. However, the community’s decision to ban hunting, also would have impeded the acquisition of a *huangana*, which brings me back to the community’s rules and their resulting sacrifices. Today, locally hunted *huanganas* are not present at weddings. The community’s decision to prohibit hunting was not an easy or uncontested decision for the Añangu Community. Tomás explained that “when we signed an agreement [to ban hunting] in this same community, with all of the members, we then had to enforce the rules of the community. For us instead of hunting, it is better to conserve the animals, caring for everything. It was really difficult, but in the community, we have agreed.”

Why did they make this decision? Prior to the ban, the Añangu Community hunted for both its own consumption and to sell trophy animals. Hunting was an important means of livelihood. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that they were having to trek deeper and deeper into the forest to find animals. At this point, the Napo Wildlife Center was already an established ecolodge. However, if the trained hunters were struggling to find animals, the tourists were basically out of luck. For this reason, during assembly meetings, it was decided that hunting would be banned. According to Tomás, Iker, and Hector the first five years were really difficult. Families often did not follow the rule. However, the animals began to return.

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39 In Spanish: “Cuando nosotros firmamos un convenio [para prohibir la caza] en la comunidad mismo con todos los socio, entonces teníamos que regir a la regla de la comunidad. Entonces para ir nosotros más bien en vez de cazar mejor ir conservando los animales, cuidando todo entonces. Fue bastante duro, pero en la comunidad nosotros hemos puesto de acuerdo.”
Today, the community not only actively enforces the rule, but have also taken great pride in the decision to not hunt. They are tactically constructing both an internal and public identity, which emphasizes that they are a community who cares about their environment. Doña Miriam explains that other communities keep hunting, but “if they want to hunt, they have to walk […] one or two days to hunt, but here there are quantities” of animals.\(^40\) This pride is echoed by Doña Lidia who while looking down at her small daughter says that the community stopped hunting to “conserve,” “it is for the good of our little ones who are coming.”\(^41\) While this argument echoes of Western conservation ideologies, it does not change the Añangu’s observations that animals have returned or that there are real pressures impacting the habitats of Amazonian wildlife. The decision to ban hunting is an agentive tool. In general, tourists, who are largely from the United States and Europe, are excited by the community’s decision to not hunt. Few Westerners want to believe that monkeys can be served on the dinner table, although there are several Añangu Community members who miss game-meat. Youth from Añangu may not grow up learning the ancestral tradition of hunting. Instead, they are born into the community, which is becoming famous around Ecuador for their tourism project and environmental ethics. Tomás explained to me, that before, when he saw a monkey, he wanted to hunt it. However, now, he only wants to take pictures. For better or for worse, rather than eating

\(^40\) In Spanish: “Siguen en otros comunidades, si quieren cazar tienen que caminar dos, un día a dos días para poder cazar y aquí hay cantidades” de animales.

\(^41\) In Spanish: “Es para nuestro bien de nuestros pequeños que vienen”
monkeys, youth from Añangu will grow up shooting videos of monkeys on their tablets and smartphones.

Beyond hunting, the community has also chosen to restrict tree felling. There are important exceptions to this rule, which are generally use oriented. For example, when the community wanted to build the new Kuri Muyu in the Community Center, local timber was purposefully used for construction. Using this timber has a narrative function, given that the Mamakunas share with tourists that the Kuri Muyu is made from local resources in an ancestral style. While these exceptions are important, other construction projects must rely on products being brought in by canoe, from outside. This brings up environmental questions which go beyond the scope of this study. Where are these materials coming from? They still have to be extracted from somewhere. Also, does using the motorized canoe have a net negative impact on the environment, when compared to the local extraction of resources?

These are some of the challenges presented by ecotourism. Even if there is a pool of resources locally available, the need to maintain an environment which is appealing to tourists is also important. For example, one morning, I was standing in the restaurant speaking with Kichwa guides from the Napo Wildlife Center. In the distance we heard a loud buzzing just before we saw a tree topple to the ground. The students were cutting trees to make the Kuri Muyu visible from the Community Center. A guide called over a student walking past the restaurant and told them to run to where they are cutting and make them stop. There were tourists visiting, trees could not be falling. Again, there is an understanding that tourists may not want to see trees being cut down. This does not fit with imaginaries of pristine forests, where Indigenous peoples harmoniously coexist with the environment. Although it should acknowledged, that tree felling is not inherently “unharmonious.” The Amazon’s incredible biodiversity cannot be
separated from the anthropogenic impact from millennia of coexistence. In general, the Añangu do not try to erase their impact on the land from the tourist gaze. However, their conservation of trees is a narrative that is shared with tourists. It is not a narrative which obscures the truth, the Añangu truly have limited almost all felling on their land. They certainly would not turn over their land to a lumber company. In presenting to tourists, they are trying to strike a balance between saying that they use local resources for the construction of buildings, but that they also try to protect and sustain the forest they have. All of that being said, if they did want to tell a different narrative, one that emphasized no tree felling, the community could make the decision to do so.

**Environmental Vulnerabilities**

On April 16th, 2016, I was stuck in a parking lot at Kino Stadium in Tucson, Arizona after leaving a concert. We were going to be sitting there for a while, so I took a moment to check my phone. A news alert was awaiting me, “Major Earthquake Strikes Ecuador.” Already shaking, my panic escalated when I read that the epicenter was only 16 miles away from Muisne. Prior to coming to graduate school, I had been to Ecuador twice, working on farms near Muisne, a small island off of the northwest-corner of Ecuador. I stayed with a local family I had befriended and had initially intended to do my M.A. research on cacao farming in the area. I immediately began sending panicked messages to my friend’s from the coast. Fortunately, everyone I knew was physically safe, but many of their livelihoods had been devastated. Alex, whose family had taken me into their home on three occasions, lost a forest of cacao trees. When I was in Quito at the end of May, Alex, who had moved to the city for work, told me that people were still sleeping in tents on the soccer field after their homes had collapsed. Fortunately, not all
stories were devastating. My friend Elio had spent years building a small hotel on his farm. By some miracle, La Aldea did not fall. However, his dreams of attracting tourists interested in agrotourism is unlikely to happen anytime soon. Not only does the area have to rebuild, but Muisne was not a particularly popular tourist destination on April 15th, 2016.

In Añangu, they did not even feel the quake, but this does not mean that it did not leave its impact. Both the Napo Cultural and the Napo Wildlife Centers had dozens of cancellations from guests. The hypothesis was that foreign tourist canceled their entire trip to Ecuador after the quake. During my field work, there was a week at the Napo Cultural Center where there were absolutely no tourists. This is a difficult economic loss to absorb, given that the community had hired a crew of construction workers to build a new tourist cabin.

Climate and environmental disasters are oftentimes unpredictable. In 1987, after the Reventador Volcano erupted, more than half of the Añangu Community members left (Torres 2013). What happens if there is another eruption? There are also serious issues of flooding in Añangu. In the introduction of the thesis, I mentioned that land had been carried away by the Napo River. When Jacobo said that Añangu had “shrunk,” he was not kidding. Probably sixty to seventy feet had disappeared. Community member homes are now dangerously close to the river’s edge. While the tourist cabins are safely inland, during the most recent flood, tourists were taken to their room by canoe. As glaciers continue to melt upstream and the rains become increasingly unpredictable, it is possible to imagine that there will be a long-term impact on local tourism.

Finally, I must one last time return to the petroleum question. The Añangu do not want their land to be explored or exploited for petroleum. In the Historia de la Comunidad Añangu, or History of the Añangu Community, it is stated that tourism is a reaction to the exploitation of the
Amazon via petroleum extraction and that they hope there will be no drilling in Yasuní as a result of its mega-biodiversity (Torres 2013). Proactively, the community invited both President Rafael Correa and his former Vice-President and President-Elect, Lenin Moreno to visit the Napo Wildlife Center. Moreno will take office on May 24, 2017. During Moreno’s visit, which was prior to the cancellation of the ITT-Initiative, a leader in the community stated, “our community will not allow any oil company to enter and will care for the fauna and flora in this place” (TransPort 2013). By demonstrating the quality of the tourism project, the hope is that tourism in Añangu will not face the same fate as the Huaorani Ecolodge. Nonetheless, if the President of the Republic and the National Assembly deem that extraction is in the national interest, the Añangu Community will have little power in resisting the government’s incursion.

Ecotourism, as a tourism industry, is dependent not just on the commodification of nature, but on a form of nature that is intriguing to tourists. There is no location on earth that is devoid of “environment,” “ecology” or “nature,” but not every location is equally ecologically attractive or interesting for tourism’s sake. Currently, the Añangu are capitalizing on the environment in which their community is located, but this environment is susceptible to Pachamama or Mother Nature’s changes and the incursions of humankind. The Añangu Community envisions their tourism project as a long-term initiative that will benefit generations to come, but it is difficult to mitigate the vulnerabilities created by the very environment in which they are embedded.
Environmental Education

To avoid finishing this section on a dreary note, I want to conclude by focusing on the relationship between ecotourism and education. In Honey’s pivotal book *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, she argues that ecotourism is distinct from nature tourism, because “properly understood, [ecotourism] goes further, striving to respect and benefit protected areas as well as the people living around or on these lands” (2008, 4). What does “benefitting protected areas” mean exactly? To a great extent, this protection is embedded in the idea of conservation. The notion is that ecotourism will sustain ecosystems, protecting them from land conversion or extractive industries, while providing income to local communities. However, ecotourism is often not reduced to conservation and income. There is an important learning aspect involved in an ecotourism experience. A learning process that will ideally create activists, who at the very least spread public awareness about the value of specific ecosystems. Honey quotes Ceballos-Lascuráin who says that “the person who practices ecotourism will eventually acquire a consciousness that will convert [them] into somebody keenly interested in conservation issues” (Ceballos-Lascurian 1988). Honey explains that Ceballos-Lascuráin and company emphasize that ecotourism should build an “activist constituency among the traveling public committed to environmental protection” (Honey 2008).

While the creation of an activist constituency may be more of an ideal sentiment than a tangible reality, the educational component of ecotourism is a significant element of the ecotourism experience in Añangu. At the Napo Cultural Center and the Napo Wildlife Center, this education is both environmental and cultural. Tourists will learn the scientific names of trees, plants, and animals. Simultaneously, they will be told the Kichwa names of these same entities, learning how they are important in Kichwa cosmologies. Guest will learn about primary
forest and secondary forest, or swampy terrains and terra firme, but they will also learn about the importance of *Pachamama* and the interconnectedness of Kichwas and the Amazon. At the *Kuri Muyu*, tourists will see the innovative ways Kichwa people use resources from the Amazon. They will be shown how one can make long distance calls with a snail shell, build entire homes without hammers or nails, and see that turtle shells and monkey skin are useful for playing music. I will be looking at culture more extensively in the next section, but the Añangu value the fact that they both can share their elements of their cultures with visiting guests and that these guests are interested in learning about Kichwa culture.

It is important to emphasize that this learning process is not a one-way experience. Guides working in ecotourism are required to have an extensive knowledge of the scientific terms associated with the ecology of the Amazon. For tourists, the scientific term may often take priority over the Kichwa terminology. This became evident to me in 2015, when an older, English tourist approached me at the end of his trip. I often had the opportunity to interact and converse with tourists. This particular man and I had bonded over beer preferences. Just minutes before he departed on the canoe for Coca City, he asked me to relay a message to the manager. After explaining how wonderful his experience was, his primary suggestion was that the guides become better versed in the scientific names of local botany. While he enjoyed learning the traditional names, he also wanted to learn what he understood to be a more universal or accurate name. It is understandable that he wanted a specific semiotic concept which made sense within his worldview. A concept that he could translate and identify at a later time. However, in hearing this, I felt a sense of discomfort in the separation being applied to the traditional name and the scientific names. Ultimately, they are both linguistic constructions intended to represent material
reality, but I would imagine that for many visitors the traditional and sacred local names are not sufficient substitutes for the scientific names.

Katalina, the former President of the community and one of Añangu’s four female guides, explained to me that “we are in that learning process, right? How to speak scientifically […] [because] we speak differently, we speak because our parents showed us a fruit and told us that it was called this, but we do not know it deeply.” This quote saddened me. The suggestion that “knowing deeply” means knowing “scientifically,” shows how Indigenous knowledge is problematically interpreted as unscientific, even by Katalina. Nonetheless, this learning process and embrace of Western scientific terms is increasingly necessary for running a successful ecotourism project, especially if the majority of your market are foreigners. Despite my frustration with this hierarchy of knowledges, throughout my conversations with guides and staff, overall, I found that guides embraced and valued both Indigenous and Western scientific terminology and ecological explanations. It was not about rejecting the Kichwa terms for the Western “scientific,” but instead focused on learning from both. As emphasized by Katalina, most of the guides grew up learning and valuing the Indigenous terms. However, there is also a lot of excitement involved in the learning of ecological concepts. I understand this learning process to be similar to learning a new language. Languages emerge from differing cosmologies, meaning that there will not be universal, perfect interpretations between languages. A particular species may have a name in both Kichwa and “science.” This name is created through a set of narratives and understanding, that are different, but do not have to negate one another.

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42 In Spanish: “Entonces también estamos en ese proceso ya, a aprender, ¿no? Como se habla científicamente […] [porque] nosotros hablamos muy diferente hablamos porque nuestros padres nos enseñaron este fruta se llama así, pero no lo sabemos a lo profundo.”
In the case of guides in Añangu, both local and from other Indigenous communities, I found that there was a lot of enthusiasm around learning ecology. This did not mean that they threw their Indigenous beliefs out the window. These differing understandings were not seen as being incompatible, even if many tourists give science a hierarchical prioritization. Take the case of Adrían, who was my most dedicated English student. Adrían is one of two employees who are Shiwiar, a small Indigenous Nation who largely lives near the border with Peru. Their traditional land was divided as a result of the Peru-Ecuador territorial dispute. Adrían is the only guide who is not Kichwa, but he has a firm grasp of Kichwa cosmology and culture, due to its similarities with Shiwiar understandings of the world and being. Adrían also loves studying ecology and the environmental issues more broadly. He had acquired ecological textbooks, which he would study in his free time. He did not have access to the internet while working, so I would frequently find articles about petroleum in the Amazon written in English, which we would analyze in place of a formal English class. Adrían wants to become one of the prestigious National Guides, but he has also considered returning to school to do a Masters in ecology. Adrían ‘s passion for ecology and environmental studies is palpable to anyone who even briefly meets him.

Dr. Maribel Alvarez once told me that curiosity belongs to everybody. In Añangu, guides are intrigued by ecology, but this does not translate into a rejection of Indigenous knowledge. I have sat next to Kichwa guides who were conversing with non-Indigenous bilingual guides.
They would have their birding books open, excitedly identifying which birds they had seen, while helping each other review Kichwa and Western scientific names. Guides from very different backgrounds were working together to teach one another. Over the two summers I have spent in Añangu, I have found that there are students who enthusiastically gave up their free time in the evening to practice English with me. Learning is a never-ending process, a process which is differentially embraced by individuals working in the Kichwa Añangu Community.
Chapter 12
Cultural Reclamation

Thoughts on Cultural Reclamation

On my first day in the field in 2016, I sat down to dinner with Diego, a community member, who has played many roles working at both the Napo Wildlife and Napo Cultural Centers. Although I had only been in Añangu for five hours, it was clear that there had been significant changes at the Napo Cultural Center. The summer before had often felt like “boys” camp to me. Only three women were working at the lodge, while the rest of the Mamakunas left for the Kuri Muyu at 6:00 am. In 2016, this was completely flipped. There was as many or more Mamakunas more or less running the show at the Napo Cultural Center. I also learned that I would be doing English and computer classes with the Mamakunas each afternoon. I was thrilled by the changes and began to ask Diego about the community’s decision to move the Mamakunas and Kuri Muyu to the Community Center. He explained that tourists often asked, “If this is the Mamakunas lodge, where are all the women?” It is important to again to note that the Napo Cultural Center has been marketed as the Mamakunas lodge since it opened in 2012. There is a good reason for this. It was the Mamakunas who advocated for having a lodge in the center of the community, closer to their homes. By 2016, the community finally had the ability to build a new Kuri Muyu in the center and to formally and contractually employ the Mamakunas at the lodge. Today, tourists are likely to interact with Mamakunas not only at the Kuri Muyu, but also in the restaurant, relaxing in the late afternoon, or even as their guides.

In addition to being promoted as the Mamakunas lodge, the Napo Cultural Center was also opened to engage in cultural tourism, hence its location in the Community Center. Diego explained that at the Napo Wildlife Center, they are in the business of selling nature. At the Napo Cultural Center, they are selling culture. I was surprised by the bluntness of his remarks. There
was not only an awareness of cultural commodification, but an explicit intention to do so. While Diego describes the direct marketing intention of the Napo Cultural Center, his remarks do not tell the whole story. The relationship between culture and tourism in Añangu cannot be reduced to market promotion or capital exchanges.

During a group interview in 2015, the three male guides I was chatting with continued to repeat the word “reivindicación” each time they spoke about culture and tourism. This was the first of many occasions I would encounter the word that summer. Through context and clarifying questions, I surmised that folks were more or less talking about cultural recovery, rescuing, or revitalization. By the time I returned to the United States and began transcribing my interviews, I decided to figure out exactly what this word meant. Drawing on internet searches and consultation with bilingual Native Spanish speakers, I found that “reclamation” was the more context-appropriate word. Añangu Community members were emphasizing that tourism was being used as a medium for cultural reclamation.

The importance in distinguishing between rescuing culture and cultural reclamation was made clear to me during a conversation while visiting the Kuri Muyu with a pair of Ecuadorian tourists. In talking about why the Kuri Muyu was started, Tómas, their guide, explained that the Kuri Muyu was intended to:

“[…] maintain [culture], to teach how we lived before. Many people talk about rescuing, right? But rescuing is like someone is drowning, dying. More or less, we speak about reclaiming, reclaiming how our parents lived, how was the tradition.”

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43 In Spanish: “[…] para mantener [cultura], enseñar de cómo vivimos antes, bueno muchos dicen rescatando, no? Pero rescatando es algo como alguien está ahogando, muriendo. Más o menos como nosotros hablamos de reivindicando, reivindicando como vivía nuestros padres, como era la tradición.”
Tómas’s words provide insight into the endlessly dynamic and shifting nature of culture. It cannot be overlooked that for many Kichwa peoples, cultures and livelihoods throughout the Amazon were brutalized by Spanish colonization and agents of power in the post-colonial Ecuadorian state. While Indigenous resistance and rebellion were ubiquitous, the Ecuadorian Amazon became a land of extractive industries. As explained by Muratorio, the *Oriente*, as the Amazon is commonly called in Ecuador, well “into the twentieth century, […] was characterized by an extractive economy and a society of gold seekers and rubber tappers, of adventurers, soldiers of fortune, and missionaries” (Muratorio 1991, 2). Muratorio explains that “ethnic prejudice” defined the relationship between “whites” and Kichwa people, where the former attacked Kichwa “social identity, their ethnic dignity, and their symbolic systems” (4). However, she also finds that among the Napo Runa, who are Kichwa Indigenous from the Napo Region (where Añangu Community founders are originally from), there is a “culture of everyday resistance,” where the Napo Runa “maintain cultural integrity,” preventing “their easy cooptation into the dominant economic and cultural order of the time” (5).

The very foundation of the Añangu Community was an act of resistance against the Ecuadorian state’s attempts to bring the state’s ideologies of cultural and economic hegemony to the Amazon. As *colonos* were being encouraged to move to the Amazon throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Añangu Community members sought land outside of the Amazon’s growing urban centers (Yashar 2006). In many ways, tourism may appear to complacently adhere to global capitalism and globalized transnationalism. However, the Añangu’s relationship and active use of tourism resists neoliberal capitalism’s goal of “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills,” in an environment which prioritizes state deregulation, privatization and rights to private property, free markets, and free trade (Harvey 2005, 2-3). Tourism in Añangu is managed
by community governance and is employed to achieve community-defined goals or self-determination. As Tómas explains, one of these goals is cultural reclamation or *reivindicación cultural*. Tómas’s words recognize that the Añangu have undergone cultural shifts over decades and centuries. There would be nothing to reclaim if nothing had changed. Tómas characterizes cultural tourism not as a means for salvaging a dying culture. Instead, he characterizes cultural tourism as a way of taking pride of their cultural ancestry and actively working to keep that history alive. Tourism is serving as the means by which the Añangu can reclaim, and in the process define, who they are as a people that share a cultural identity (Holm, Pearson and Chavis 2003).

While Tómas uses the word “maintain,” the goal for many in Añangu is not actually to return to some pre-colonial or even pre-tourism state. Instead, working in tourism has become an inseparable part of constructing Añangu cultural identity. A key sign of this is the “typical clothing” or ropa típica the Añangu Community has designed as a marker of their Añangu identity. This ropa típica is foundationally connected to tourism. The Mamakunas will use the clothing as a “uniform,” to work every day, although skirts are replaced with leggings when they are guiding or working in the gardens. During work, men from the community will sometimes wear their typical shirts (they do not have “typical” pants) when they are not performing hard labor or guiding. For example, guides from the community will often wear their shirts to dinner with tourists. While the ropa típica is directly tied to tourism, its purpose in not limited to the sphere
of tourism. During the monthly community meetings, all Añangu Community members will wear their attire. It creates a sense of solidarity, that uniquely belongs to Añangu. They will also wear the *ropa típica* during special celebrations. For example, during a Mother’s Day celebration in 2015, the other volunteer and myself where the only *warmis* or women wearing pants, instead of the *saya* or skirt.

I also learned about the regret expressed by community members on one occasion when they did not have *ropa típica* with them. When I arrived in 2016, half of the community members were in Atacames, a beach town in northern Ecuador. They left their role as the hosts, to become beach-tourists on the coast. Over lunch one day, Felipe told me that the *Mamakunas* began performing their typical dances for a group hosting them in Atacames. He told me that it was beautiful, but that they were all sad, because the *Mamakunas* did not have their *ropa típica*. This anecdote makes visible the strong connection between identity and clothing in Añangu. This is a trend that is being taken up by other communities in the region. Alvaro told me that his community is also designing their own *ropa típica*. He proudly told me that it will be markedly different than the *ropa típica* in Añangu. His community, the one I mentioned that will soon be opening an ecolodge, also intends to use clothing as a specific marker of community identity. Although both communities are Kichwa and from the *Bajo Napo* region of the Amazon, identity is being constructed locally, in addition to “nationally,” in the sense of being a Kichwa Nation or Ecuadorian people.

In the cases of Añangu and Alvaro’s community, it is clear that tourism is, in fact, reshaping culture. However, the development and display of *ropa típica* is not perceived as a burden or frustration. Instead, it goes back to Tómas’s discussion of cultural reclamation. The Añangu are constructing their cultural identity as Kichwa Añangu people, which does not require
a return to an ancestral past. When tourists visit the Kuri Muyu, they learn about ancestral clothing. Their Mamakuna guide explains that before, their ancestors would make clothes from hunting animals and ingeniously creating cloth out of tree bark. While there is great pride invested in this past, again the Añangu banned hunting, so using fur is not an option. The tree bark method, which involves stripping and soaking bark from the Llanchama tree, creates a durable cloth. However, it is simply not a feasible means of creating clothing for the Añangu today. There are too many people, the process is complex, and constant stripping of bark takes a toll on the trees, which is not a quickly regenerating process. Ultimately, the goal of ropa típica is not to return to a distant past. Instead, it serves to reclaim culture, by allowing the Añangu to construct their own culture in defiance of historical pressures from colonial powers, the state, and Western trends in globalization which have directly and indirectly acted in an attempt to erase Kichwa culture.

A Visit to the Kuri Muyu

Around 9:00 am every morning, the Mamakunas leave their jobs as cooks, waitresses, housekeepers, and gardeners to become performing artists and cultural guides at the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization. The Kuri Muyu itself is made up of two ancestral Kichwa structures. The first house the tourists will visit is called the huagra wasi, which roughly translates to the “crazy cow” house. The second house is the called the maloca. This round structure was ancestrally used by Kichwa people as their primary dwelling. When the tourists emerge from a forested path, they will be led to the huagra wasi, where the Mamakunas will be seated along benches awaiting their arrival. Most of the Mamakunas will be taking advantage of the tourists’ visit to work on their artisan crafts, such as bracelets, necklaces, and shigras. One of my most
memorable experiences at the Kuri Muyu was when a group of university students from the sierra or the Andes became particularly involved in the performative aspect of the cultural experience. This group of thirty, which ranged in age and ethnicity, were all studying tourism. When they arrived at the Kuri Muyu, Liana greeted them as their guide and asked them to take a seat. She explained that the Women’s Organization is called Kuri Muyu, because kuri means gold (oro) and muyu means seed (pepa). The women chose the name “Golden Seed,” for their organization because they collect seeds from the forest to create the artisan crafts. Liana went on to detail each of the materials from the forest which were used to construct the huagra wasi and the maloca.

Tourists are pretty universally impressed when the Mamakunas emphasize that no nails or hammers are used to create the large structures.

After finishing her talk on Kichwa construction, Liana told the group that they would be dancing. First, the Mamakunas would dance for them, while in the second dance, the group would be invited to join. The dances proceeded as normal. One Mamakuna played the drum and sang, while the other used a turtle shell as an accompanying instrument. During the second dance, this group of students were excited to join the Mamakunas. They danced in the awkward way that most tourists do, unaccustomed to the style and beat. Tourists tend to overly accentuate movements, almost jumping, rather than lightly stepping.
After they all took their seats, Katalina stepped in to begin telling them about each of the instruments that were used during the songs. She explained how the turtle shell was played by rubbing your hand along wax where the turtle’s neck had once rested. She then explains that the drum uses two types of animal skin, to create its unique sound. On one side they use the skin of nocturnal monkeys, while the other side has peccary (huangana) skin.

As the instruments were being passed around, students struggled with the turtle shell and shyly beat the drum. However, as the instruments made their round, a flute was pulled out by a student with a long black braid. All of the sudden, him and another young man who had grabbed drum, were standing in the middle of the Huagra Wasi, dancing and playing music. Soon, the entire class joined, circling around the two young men, as they began playing a traditional Inti Raymi dance. Inti Raymi is an Incan religious ceremony for the Sun, which continues to be celebrated by Indigenous communities throughout the Andes. As the students moved in a large circle around the musicians, one student grabbed the hand of Liana, bringing her into the circle. The other Mamakunas soon joined.

At the end of the dance, the young musicians explained that they too were Kichwa, but Kichwa from the sierra. As an outsider, it was a fascinating experience of cultural interaction. At least two groups of Kichwa peoples, from vastly different historical and cultural backgrounds, were brought together to teach one another about movement and dance. My friend Alvaro, calls this form of interaction an encounter of dialectos culturales or cultural dialects. Cultural tourism created an educational space, where the learning was not a unidirectional action. Instead, the moment became an exchange of movement dialects between cultures. After having recorded the dance, several Mamakunas were thrilled that I could transfer it to their phones for sharing with their family and friends.
It is important to note that cultural education, within the cultural tourism experience, is never limited to the consumption of outside visitors. Despite the academic framing of cultural tourism as an extractivist commodification of culture, guides in Añangu repeatedly emphasized to me how much they enjoyed learning from tourists. Take the case of Juan, a twenty-three-year-old from a Kichwa community in Napo Province, who works as a guide and in “various services.” Juan’s enthusiasm for learning from and about other cultures is palpable. In 2015, after he learned that I had lived in China, he wanted to see all of my videos and photos from China. After English class, we would practice the few words I could speak in Mandarin. He remembered them when I returned in 2016. During an interview, Juan told me “it is very important to share our customs and our language. Additionally, we equally want to learn languages from abroad, we exchange. […] We learn from them, about themselves as well. They also share about themselves.”

Juan goes on to discuss not only what he learns from visitors culturally, but also shows genuine appreciation for tourist feedback on the tourism experience.

Juan takes his job seriously. He always wants to ensure that tourists enjoy their visit. To my horror, I once watched him carry a woman to the top of an observation tower on his back, because she had knee problems. In my fieldnotes, I wrote that it was a “dehumanizing act” and that I would “sit my ass down and crawl up backwards before someone carried me up a tower.” But that was not Juan’s perspective. While tips are certainly a concern, he wanted her to enjoy the experience, to see the birds and monkeys that dance along the tree line. She was extremely grateful.

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44 In Spanish: “Es muy importante compartir nuestras costumbres y nuestra lengua. Además, igualmente queremos aprender idiomas de afuera, intercambiamos. […] Aprendemos de ellos sobre ellos también. Porque comparten ellos también.”
Tourists are a diverse bunch. They would often turn to me as an “expert,” because I was living there, spoke fluent English, and was a “researcher.” I was repeatedly asked whether the community really owned the lodge, if they truly received benefits from the tourism project. Several tourists seemed to be undergoing mini-crises of privilege as they consumed the local culture and environment of the Añangu people.

However, not all tourists spent their trip in a state of reflexivity. One group of U.S. American tourists began explaining to the manager how they could improve the local school within twenty minutes of arriving to Añangu. Another group of tourists complained because a rat had been found in their room. How are the Añangu supposed to balance environmental stewardship with pest management? Then there was the couple, the journalists, who I mentioned in the prologue. Throughout their stay, it became widely known that they were metidos or nosy. They were only in Añangu for a few days, but wanted to be inside of people’s homes and were asking personal questions that individuals were uncomfortable answering.

Ultimately, their inquiries about the ethics and importance of local tourism are similar to the ones I am looking at in this thesis. This parallel addresses an important difference between anthropologists and some (I want to emphasize “some”) journalists. Over the course of four months, I still have an incomplete picture of tourism in Añangu. Nonetheless, this thesis attempts to capture my experiences over a comparatively extended period of time. Although I attempt to include the voices and perspectives of the people who worked with me, ultimately, this is an analysis which is shaped by my viewpoint and interpretations. Journalism is an important medium of advertisement for tourism businesses. Positive press can lead to a growth in tourism numbers. However negative press can also be hugely devastating. This presents a conundrum, can a journalist who show up for only a few days, capture some sense of reality? Like me, their
stories will ultimately depend on the quality of their data collection, interpretations, and representation. In reflecting on my interaction with the journalist couple, what stands out to me the most, was our methodological approach to collecting our research. While data collection is always invasive, it is important that this process is coupled with trust and respect. There is also the importance of time. I believe in the power of journalism, but also see ethnography as a hugely important means of storytelling. Ethnographic work is based on months and often times years of research. Admittedly, I have spent hours searching for an article written by this couple with no success. However, I think it would be a fascinating comparative analysis to look at our interpretations side-by-side.

In returning to the question of education, I previously mentioned Alvaro’s notion of varying cultural dialects. He explains that in his community it would be a pleasure to receive guests like they do in Añangu. He goes on to say that it would, in fact, be “magnificent to host people from other places, to teach and also for them to share.” This emphasis on education is not only expressed by staff from outside the community. For example, Camila, who works as a guide, explained to a tourist how much she is learning by working in tourism. Camila is enthusiastic about learning English. I was touched when she told a tourist “We are now taking English, word by word I understand and thanks to Sarah, who has come here these months to teach, and from there we will keep learning.” However, Camila brings us full circle, by also emphasizing how much tourism invokes a sense of cultural pride, while also creating agency in how the Añangu maintain their culture:

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45 I should mention, the Añangu places great emphasis on calling tourists *pasajeros* or passengers rather than tourists. Guests is the somewhat flexible English translation I use, given that “passengers” is not widely used to describe tourists in the English language.

46 In Spanish: “Magnifico recibir a la gente que viene de otro lugar, enseñar y también que nos compartan.

47 In Spanish: “Ingles ya estamos siguiendo, palabras por palabra entiendo y gracias a la Sarah que ha venido esos meses para enseñar, y ahí vamos a seguir aprendiendo.”
“I am happy, all of the tourists who have come, have left satisfied, content, content about life, appreciating this culture that we are maintaining and they come to learn, our gastronomy, our everything, everything that is our culture, right? So they leave happy and my companions feel happy and me too.”

The second part of the *Kuri Muyu* fully expands on the educational relationship between cultural reclamation and cultural tourism. As tourists enter the *maloca*, they sit on benches along the walls, while their guiding *Mamakuna* begins explaining how before, Kichwa families would live in a larger version of this *maloca*. She goes on to explain how the *Mamakunas* would collect and cook food, mixing Kichwa ontologies into the explanations. For example, the fire must always have three rocks, representing the mother, the father, and the children. She will bring out the weapons that Kichwa people historically used, explaining that they were for hunting and defending their land from the Waorani. As a participant, my favorite moment of the *maloca* is always when the *Mamakunas* bring out the *chicha*. The *Mamakunas* assure the guests that it is not *chicha masticada* or chewed *chicha* (*chicha* made with saliva). They are given *chicha dulce*, or sweet *chicha* which has been fermented for a day or two with the sweet potato. Some guests excitedly down the *chicha*, having learned that it is the “natural beer” of the Amazon. Others will cautiously smell it, barely sipping from the communal bowl. They all stare in amazement when a *Mamakuna* pulls out a huge bowl,

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48 In Spanish: Yo contenta, todo lo que los visitantes que han venido, han salido muy satisfechas, felices, felices de la vida, agradeciendo que esta cultura que nosotros estamos manteniendo y vienen a conocer, nuestro gastronomía, nuestro todo, todo que es nuestro cultura, ¿no? Entonces salen feliz, también mis compañeras sienten felices y yo también.
explaining that if you were a guest in her house, you would be presented with this large bowl, full of *chicha*. You would be expected to down it in one go. Learning to drink *chicha* is a skill, one that is well worth learning.

As an interesting side note, the *Mamakunas* will also tell the tourists that scientific studies have been done on *chicha* from the Amazon. They explain that *chicha* has been found to be high in Vitamin B. A similar health discourse frames the sharing of *guayusa*, a traditional tea of the Amazon. *Guayusa* is a holly species native to the Amazon Rainforest (Dueñas, et al. 2016). Tourists will interact with *guayusa* on many occasions throughout their visit. When they first arrive, they will be presented with a *guayusa* tea that has been sweetened with sugar and lime. In the *maloca*, they will be given “natural” *guayusa* made over a fire in the *Kuri Muyu*. On their final morning, they will have the option to participate in a *guayusada*, which involves an early morning excursion to the *maloca*. Throughout each of these interactions, guides will remind tourists that *guayusa* has “more caffeine than coffee and three times the antioxidants as green tea.” Drawing on scientific studies is clearly intended to convey a message to tourists in a “language” they understand. Outsiders may struggle in understanding (which does not exclude appreciation) the cultural or spiritual importance of *guayusa* and *chicha*, but they can both grasp and become excited about the health benefits afforded by these foods. Tourists oftentimes come from cultures steeped in the language of nutrition. Knowing this, the Añangu are able cross a cultural bridge of understanding, explaining functionality through multiple discourses. The Añangu did not need scientific studies to grasp the health benefits of *chicha* and *guayusa*. Ancestral knowledge carried across generations has created sufficient validity, without the need of “Western science.” Nonetheless, there is pride expressed in the sharing of these “healthy,” cultural products. The scientific data is welcomed.
Questions of Authenticity and Reclamation? The Guayusada

On the final morning of their stay in the Kichwa Añangu Community, visiting tourists have the option to attend a guayusada, led by a Rukumama or grandmother of the community. Historically, Amazonian Kichwa people would wake up in the early morning hours to drink guayusa tea. During the guayusada, mothers would interpret the family members’ dreams and both parents would provide guidance to their children and prepare them for the day’s work (Torres 2013). Today, guayusa is still widely consumed by families in Añangu, but the early morning guayusada has become increasingly rare. Fathers are away for two week periods at the Napo Wildlife Center and Mamakunas must prepare for the day’s work at the Napo Cultural Center, while helping their children get ready for school.

Inevitably, the tourists’ experience of a guayusada is substantially altered from its ancestral practice in Kichwa homes and malocas. For tourists, the guayusada is intended to be a participatory spectacle, where the host and guests engage in an immersed sensory experience. Visitors taste the warm, unsweetened guayusa tea, while the glowing fire lights the maloca, and the smell of boiling guayusa leaves and burning firewood fill the air. They carefully listen to the Rukumama speaking in Kichwa as she relates the history of guayusadas for Kichwa families. It is clear that in this performed space, differentiated actors are intermingling to produce a guayusada ceremony for tourist consumption. At one end of this interaction, you have the Rukumama who embodies Kichwa-ness. She speaks in Kichwa, wears typical Añangu clothing, interprets dreams, and squats next to the fire. On the other end, you have international and urban Ecuadorian tourists. They require Kichwa translators, wear rubber boots, and often use cameras and cellphones to translate the guayusada into a digital format.
During the *guayusada*, the *Rukumama* is always speaking in Kichwa. While this is an intentional curation, several *Rukumamas* in Añangu barely speak Spanish. For this reason, even native Spanish speakers are dependent on the translations of their guides, who are often moving between Kichwa, Spanish, and English. During one early morning ceremony, I joined a European and Ecuadorian tourist for the *guayusada*. Our guide and interpreter was a *mestizo* man, who knows both English and Kichwa. In response to a question, the guide explained that all families in Añangu continue to practice the *guayusada*. The European tourist, Bert, looked at him in surprise and questioned whether all families really do this. The guide confirmed. After finishing the *guayusada*, Bert turned to me as we walked across a soccer field towards the restaurant. In all sincerity, he asked me “what do you think it will be like in 20 years? Will families still do the ceremony?” I did not know how to respond. I did not want to discredit the guide, but also did not want to reproduce a false version of lived reality. If the *Mamakunas* consistently told guests that they did *guayusadas* every morning, I would have no moral quandary, I would simply repeat the narrative. However, this is not how the *Mamakunas* portray themselves to tourists. While some families certainly do continue the *guayusada* ceremony, especially with the *Rukumamas* and *Rukuyayas* (grandfathers), most families do not have the time to participate.

During a panel on community organizing in the spring of 2017, Dr. Maribel Alvarez made several important points regarding “cultural authenticity.” She explained that we “condemn [cultural] appropriation all of the time, but in the process we put people in little boxes.” In her experiences she has found that “people want to have control over innovation,” where “tradition doesn’t need to be become a straightjacket” (Personal Communication 2017). This is an important point of analysis when evaluating the relationship between authenticity and cultural
tourism. In Añangu, being authentically Kichwa, does not imply a replication of an inaccessible cultural past. For one, in looking at authenticity as an entity which is static and historical, we fail to acknowledge the dynamics of historical people. Kichwa culture one hundred years ago is going to be hugely distinct from being Kichwa in the Spanish colonial era or the pre-colonial era. Also, in looking at the history of Kichwa peoples from the Amazon, Whitten explains that the lowland Kichwas in Ecuador emerged as a people as a result of “ethnogenesis” (Whitten 1978)\(^49\) Wroblewski explains that this ethnogenises is “the emergence of new group identities through fission, fusion, and redefinition” (Wroblewski 2012). In employing this term, Davidov contends that Kichwa people emerged from an adaptive process of intermarriages, colonization, the geographic interactions of the Andes and Amazon, among other factors (Davidov 2013, 17-18). The history of Kichwa people is clearly dynamic and ongoing.

In presenting their culture to tourists, the Añangu Community has made the decision that they will present a version of their culture which is relatively representative of their everyday lives. While other communities may choose to perform a more ancestral version of their culture for visiting guests, they key word here is “choose.” In community-owned tourism, decision making regarding cultural representation belongs to the community. They are able to control innovation, presentation, and performance. While the performance of cultural tourism ultimately does need to take into consideration market demand (Bunten 2010), this does not exclude creativity in the curatorial process. The Añangu have chosen to reclaim their culture, not by reproducing a life they no longer want to or even could live, but by incorporating their history into their traditional knowledge through touristic performance and oral history.

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\(^49\) Wroblewski explains ethnogenesis as: “the emergence of new group identities through fission, fusion,
When I asked Doña Miriam, a Mamakuna and community leader, why the Mamakunas organized the Kuri Muyu, she began explaining how culture had been eroding. She says:

“For this reason, the women, we have put together this organization, we have organized to reclaim our culture [...] for our children or our future, to not forget. Today I see girls, or sons from this very place, they no longer want to speak [...] Kichwa, they are embarrassed to speak. They are embarrassed to drink chicha, they are embarrassed to eat our typical food, and for this reason, we wanted to organize.”

Here, Doña Miriam demonstrates that the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organization is not intended exclusively for tourists. By learning and repeating Kichwa history and ancestral cultural practices, the Mamakunas are also creating a space where their children will learn Kichwa history and cultural practices. The Kuri Muyu is intended to keep present a sense of being Kichwa. In the current context, the context in which children are growing today, this “being” inseparably mixes Kichwa history with tourism. This does not mean that being Kichwa Añangu is inevitably tied to tourism, but it does demonstrate that the community’s relationships with the wider world has shifted. Tourism is creating a space for being Kichwa in a globalized world, at least for the Añangu Community.

Añangu Community members have smartphones, Facebook pages, and they like to travel as tourists. They also cheer for Ecuadorian soccer, play Ecuavolley, are invested in national politics, and can sing the national anthem of Ecuador in both Spanish and Unified Kichwa. Some cultural tourism projects may attempt to hide aspects of cultural identity which do not fit neo-

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50 In Spanish: “Por eso las señoras, nosotras hemos puesto esta organización, nosotras hemos organizado para reivindicar nuestro cultura [...] para nuestros hijos o para el futuro, para no olvidar. Hoy mismo veo otras niñas, o hijos de aquí mismo, ya no quieren hablar [...] Kichwa tienen verguenza de hablar, tomar chicha tienen verguenza, de comer comida típica de nosotros tienen verguenza, y por esa razón nosotras queremos organizar.”
colonial tropes of the Indigenous Other. However, in Añangu, these aspects of their lifeways are largely not hidden from tourists. Regardless, the main point I am making is that because the community is able to control how they perform their Kichwa-ness (or even their Añangu-ness) for tourists, they are able to guide and have agency in the cultural reclamation process. In Añangu, cultural performances for tourists are deeply tied to an intentional process of prideful identity construction. Through community-owned tourism, the Añangu are able to push forward and control their community-defined goal of cultural reclamation. This is where we must return to the notions of self-determination and community agency. Although certainly impacted by the “outside” world, the Añangu are creating a sense of self-determination through their community agency.

In recalling my discussion on tourism in Ecuador, I discussed the controversy surrounding Sumak Kawsay. State politics aside, several Añangu Community members told me that tourism should help build Sumak Kawsay, or the good life. As Tómas explains, “What we want the most, is to have a change for the good life.” He believes that tourism will provide all people in Añangu with the services and tools necessary for creating a good life. Tourism may not be the perfect means for providing the good life. It requires long work hours, the occasional frustrating tourist, and the stress of maintaining a business. However, it also creates opportunities for cultural reclamation, environmental stewardship, a livelihood which is morally in tune with Añangu Community goals, and opportunity for youth to stay home and take pride in their Kichwa identity. The future is never guaranteed, but for the meantime, tourism is being embraced as a processual means for realizing Sumak Kawsay, a goal which may never have a definitive end.

\[51\]In Spanish: “Lo que nosotros queremos hacer más, es tener un cambio de buen vivir.”
**Foodways in the Kichwa Añangu Community**

Before moving onto my final analysis and conclusions, I want to discuss a topic which intersects with the studies of livelihood, environmental stewardship, and cultural reclamation in relation to community-owned tourism in Añangu: food. As I mentioned in my methodologies section, I originally went to Añangu with the intention of studying local food consumption through a cultural analysis. While I ultimately switched my research to tourism, it would be a disservice to not discuss how the consumption of food is deeply connected to tourism in Añangu. This is especially important, given that on a global scale, the connections between food tourism are becoming widely celebrated. UNESCO has made this process visible as they continue to award designations such as Intangible Cultural Heritage and City of Gastronomy designations for national and local cuisines (UNESCO n.d., UNESCO n.d.).

In 2015, when I wrote my original grant and IRB to visit Añangu, I was theoretically focusing my work on the study of “foodways.” According to folklorist Susan Kalčik, foodways are “the whole pattern of what is eaten, when, how, and what it means” (Kalčik 2001). This hugely general definition opens the door for an infinite number of research considerations: Where does our food come from? Who do we eat with? How do we prepare or consume food? What is the relationship between our beliefs, rituals, sense of belonging or culture? In the case of Añangu, I was intrigued by their long-term goal of becoming food sovereign.
The Añangu are taking practical steps towards this goal. Each family continues to maintain a *chacra* or small family farm. Each of these farms, has a variety of crops, including cassava, plantain, banana, sweet potato, palm trees, cacao, white cacao, coconut trees, corn, coffee, guayusa, and small, medicinal gardens. In asking about the *chacras*, Diego explained to me “*more than anything, it is from [the chacra] that we live. How do we live from that? We always plant, cassava, green plantain, whatever gives our family the most sustenance.*”

Furthermore, each family always has chickens running around by the dozens. These home-raised chickens, provide eggs daily and meals of *pollo criollo* or locally grown chicken for special occasions. However, the Añangu have also chosen to limit the food they can procure locally. As previously discussed, the community has opted to ban all hunting in Añangu. This decision is mutually connected to a goal of being stewards of the environment and the necessity to have visible wildlife for tourism. However, it is important to reemphasize, that this was not an easy decision. Tómas explained to me that

“* […] People had problems, because they were accustomed [to hunting], because it is our culture, traditional food, all of the animals from the forest, for example, we talk about a peccary*”

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52 In Spanish: “Nosotros más que todo, de eso vivimos. ¿Cómo vivimos de eso? Siempre nosotros que sembrar, yuca, verde lo que es más sustento familiar.”
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a monkey [...] [and] in exchange for not hunting we bring in products from the West like rice, canned goods, beef, everything that is from the West." 53

This quote highlights two important threads to consider in analyzing the decision to ban hunting. For one, Tomas says hunting is “our culture.” How do the Añangu balance their goal of cultural reclamation with the banning of an ancestral cultural practice? As I have been discussing throughout this chapter, the answer can only be found in understanding that culture is dynamic and that cultural reclamation is not grounded in the impossible return to an ancestral past. It also depends on the understanding that culture can be actively and consciously constructed. Even if being Kichwa is connected to an ancestral past of hunting, being Kichwa Añangu can celebrate a cultural embrace of not hunting. As a cultural analyst, my goal is not to evaluate whether the prohibition is in some way good or bad, but instead to learn how the Añangu are enacting their agency, given their economic and environmental realities, to construct a cultural characteristic that the community-widely embraces.

Tómas’s comment also sheds important insight into the prevalence of “Western” food in Añangu. While the Añangu Community or at least several members within it, may embrace the long-term goal of becoming food sovereign, in the current moment there are many factors which drive the consumption of outside foods. The prohibition of hunting is one clear example. Another is that the community has banned all farmed animals except for chickens. This means that there

53 In Spanish: “a gente tenía problemas porque está acostumbrado, porque [cazar] es la cultura nuestro, comida tradicional, todo los animales del bosque, por ejemplo hablamos de un pecarí o un mono [...] y] ha cambio de no cazar entonces llevamos productos del parte occidental como por ejemplo arroz, enlatados, pollo, carne, todo que es del parte occidental.”.
can be no cows, pigs, or goats in Añangu. The fear is that those animals will overconsume the forest. The community can fish in the Napo River, which brings us to the question of time. Do the Añangu have time to become food sovereign? Fortunately, the climatic conditions of the Amazon allow for year-round food growth. However, each family’s parents are away from home for two week periods, before having a seven-day vacation. While the Mamakunas are able to come home in the evenings, this does not mean that there is adequate time to care for the chacra for the majority of families. I say the majority because not every adult in Añangu works as a part of the tourism project. However, for most families, both parents are involved in tourism. While children certainly take on certain tasks in their parent’s absence, they are also students, with homework, and oftentimes, an hour walk to and from school.

As previously discussed, when families have Saturday’s off, they will often travel to the Feriado de Pompeya to purchase foods from outside. Canned foods and rice have become staples of the local diet. Rice in particular, has become a beloved food. On one occasion, when we had run out of rice in the ecolodge cafeteria, the poor cook was subjected to endless complaints of hunger. I was repeatedly told that it was impossible to be full without rice. Rice, of course, is not native to the Amazon. However, it too has made its way not only into the local diet, but into a cultural understanding of diet in Añangu. Rice is necessary.

However, the presence of outside or “Western” food, is consciously critiqued in Añangu. Tómas told me:
“We are no longer eating natural food, [instead it is food] with chemicals, which a lot of people worry about. Besides that, speaking of our ancestors, they ate natural food, so a person could live to be 100 or 120 years old. Without contamination, without chemicals.” 54

This sentiment was echoed by Hector, who said:

“Long before, our parents ate food naturally, but our food is half contaminated, what I am saying is that I am contaminated.” 55

Both of these men express a belief that if they were only eating food from the forest, “traditional” food, they would be healthy. Instead, their bodies are contaminated by the consumption of “Western” food. It is important to note, that when I say “Western” foods, this does not refer to a specific cuisine or location, but instead to food that is not considered culturally Kichwa. Furthermore, when I say “culturally Kichwa” or “typical food/comida típica” at it is locally called, this is not limited to foods that are native to the Amazon. Plantains, banana, and pollo criollo, all of which come from “outside,” but are readily described as being typical Kichwa foods, given their importance to Añangu understanding of Kichwa culture today.

Tourism is undoubtedly entrenched in this process of “contamination.” Not only do these men have limited time to focus on food sovereignty, they also need to eat at work. Employees at both the Napo Wildlife and the Napo Cultural Centers will eat food in the cafeteria. While the cafeteria does cook Ecuadorian national-style cuisine, this often includes several “Western”

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54 In Spanish: “Ya no somos comiendo la comida natural, [es comida] con químicos, entonces mucho gente se preocupa de eso. Además de eso, hablando de los antepasados, comieron la comida natural, entonces una persona podía vivir hasta 100 a 120 años. Sin contaminación, sin químicos.”

55 In Spanish: “Mucho más antes nuestros padres alimentaban la comida naturalmente, si es que nuestro alimentación es medio contaminada, yo digo que yo ya soy contaminada.”
foods, such as canned fish, rice, and bread. Students also eat lunch in the Napo Cultural Center’s cafeteria. For children and teens, meals at home are also shaped by the foods their parents can provide given their lifestyle. Tómas expresses concern with the food available and the prohibition of hunting when he says:

“Today, our children do not know how to catch an animal or get their own food, and many of them I think no longer want to drink chicha. They only want sugar, tang, coffee […]. It is extremely important to know what culture is, our great culture has changed because of our jobs.”

We can see a clear tension between tourism both changing the culture, while simultaneously serving as a tool for cultural reclamation. For example, here are two quotes from two Mamakunas, which are responding to my question about why they started the Kuri Muyu Women’s Organizations:

“[We started the Kuri Muyu] to not lose our culture, to shows guests what it looks likes, and also for our children, so that they do not forget our customs. […] To not forget. Also, now, for some time, they are forgetting how to drink chicha, how to speak our language, they are forgetting. So that’s why, for that we have the organization” - Liana

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56 In Spanish: “Hoy día ya no saben, coger el animal o comida, entonces muchos creo ya no quieren tomar chicha. Porque solamente quieren azúcar, tang, café, […]. Es bastante importante saber lo que es la cultura, la cultura genial ha cambiado a través de nuestros trabajos”

57 In Spanish: “Para no perder nuestra cultura, demostrar a los pasajeros que vienen como parece, y también para nuestros hijos, para que no se olvidan nuestro costumbre, […] Para no olvidar. También, ahora, desde tiempo están olvidando de tomar chicha, hablar nuestra idioma, están olvidando. Entonces, por eso, para eso es la organización.”
“We have this lodge, it is very close to our children since they study right here. [We started the Kuri Muyu] to not forget our customs, how to speak [Kichwa], drink chicha. No young people want to drink chicha. It is Kichwa. Thinking about this here, we started [to organize].”

- Queta

While the relationship between tourism and consumption of “Western” foods is unlikely to be easily resolved, it is clear that the Mamakunas see tourism as a medium for promoting the consumption of “typical” foods. Tourism keeps the knowledge surrounding these foods alive and present in everyday discourse. I have to say, that despite the almost universal rhetoric that young people are not drinking chicha, my observations were quite distinct. Whenever chicha came out, youth seemed to flock to its presence. Tourism does seem to be supporting the reinvigoration of chicha drinking. I believe that this is being driven in large part, by the community’s decision to bring the Kuri Muyu to the Community Center. Now that the Mamakunas are working at the Napo Cultural Center, they bring chicha to work each day, which is then shared among one another, their children, and other ecolodge staff. During the summer of 2015, I only engaged with chicha when I visited the Kuri Muyu and during a Mother’s Day festival. In 2016, it was a daily presence. It was not uncommon or unwelcomed to start and finish our English classes with chicha.

In fact, the Mamakunas have planted cassava all around the ecolodge. This communal source of cassava is being used to make chicha, which is then shared with everyone who is working. On one occasion, the Mamakunas and I actually made the traditional chicha masticada or chewed chicha. I had learned that morning that my English class would be canceled, because the Mamakunas were going to make chicha in the cafeteria. The rainy season had ended and it

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was decided that the construction workers needed *chicha* to get through the hot days. As I strolled into the cafeteria that afternoon, I found Señora Queta and her teenage daughter Tiana alone, mashing the cassava. Tiana soon had to go home, leaving Señora Queta and I alone. She began telling me stories about *chicha masticada* or chewed *chicha* and how much better it tastes. All of the sudden, she decided to show me how to make it. Before I knew it, I had cassava in my mouth, which I would be spitting into the *masa* minutes later. The process is actually quite simple. As you mash the cassava, you simply grab a handful of the mass, chew it or a bit and then spit it back into the cassava *masa*. The cassava mass is not drowning is saliva, but the saliva does drive the fermentation process. Shortly after we began, the other *Mamakunas*, who had been performing at the *Kuri Muyu*, appeared. They all laughed when they saw what we were doing. Toothbrushes were grabbed and everyone soon joined in. There are many cultural reasons for making *chicha masticada*. Most importantly, the mother’s saliva is supposed to keep the family together. Perhaps now, the shared *chicha mastica* will continue holding the community together. Regardless, I will take *chicha masticada* over *chicha* with sweet potato any day.

Everyone is in a better mood when *chicha* is available in abundance. It gives you an energetic high, which I personally prefer to caffeine, and can be quite alcoholic when fermented for several days. *Chicha* is also shared communally. *Mamakunas* will use one or two bowls to serve a large group. Everyone takes more needed breaks when *chicha* is available and laughter is
generally pervasive in these gatherings. As this particular batch of *chicha* made its rounds, it was commonly called *la chicha de Sarah Muyu* or Sarah Muyu’s *chicha*. In Kichwa, *sara* means corn and *muyu* means seed or kernel. Although strange sounding in English, Corn Seed was the endearing nickname given to me by the *Mamakunas*.

In analyzing foodways in Añangu, it also necessary to discuss the consumption of food by tourists. The majority of food consumed by tourists, is imported from Coca City or Quito. It arrives on a shipment every Thursday. Even “typical” foods, such as tilapia are brought in, due to limitations on local fishing and time. Nonetheless, guests will be served a number of crops grown locally. This includes *guayusa* tea, plantains, and cassava. In the long term, the community does intend to grow more food locally for both the restaurant and the cafeteria at the Napo Cultural Center. Earlier, I mentioned that there is community garden of sorts, which is largely cared for by high school students. While the greenhouse has suffered from pests, they have grown large crops of rice, corn, cassava, and pineapple. Nonetheless, production does not currently meet the demands necessitated by running a tourism business.

All guests who visit the Napo Cultural Center, including guests from the Napo Wildlife Center who visit the Community Center for their “cultural experience,” will eat one “typical meal.” For the appetizer, they may be served *ceviche de palmito*, or palm heart ceviche. The
main dish will usually be \textit{maíto de pescado}, or fish cooked in the \textit{maíto} leaf, with a side of cassava in a peanut sauce. Their savory dessert will consist of \textit{chontacurros} or palm weevil grubs and \textit{patasmuyo} or white cacao seeds. The consumption of these culturally meaningful foods, creates a space where tourists physically ingest “Kichwa-ness.”

Despite the cultural bridges which can be built through the consumption of food, there are still various disparities separating Kichwa-ness from foreignness. Tourists are eating in the ecolodge restaurant, where they drink from wine glasses, use shined silverware, and are served by multiple waitresses and waiters. In Añangu homes, mothers and older daughters do most of the cooking. In the restaurant tourists consume food prepared by a male chef and their staff. In regard to language, you will hear Spanish spoken at some tables, but the majority of the guests will be speaking English or a European language. Within their homes, Añangu families speak both Spanish and Kichwa, but in the restaurant, the only Kichwa you will hear is the occasional food name or the teaching of a basic vocabulary word, “\textit{pagrachu} – thank you,” “\textit{ally tuta} - goodnight.” Clothes are also important markers of distinction. While tourists may “clean up” for the evening meal, they often use socks and wear water-resistant, outdoor-ready apparel. Guides, both female and male, will usually be wearing their \textit{ropa típica}. Many of the tourists can also afford the expensive alcoholic beverages, usually treating their guides to a drink. Finally, when the food is served, waiters or guides will explain its cultural significance and when the \textit{chotacurros} or palm grubs come out, the sound of collective squeals and nervous laughter fills the restaurant.

This act of consuming the Other sheds light on the uneven power relations which can exist within the cultural tourism setting. Visiting the Napo Cultural Center or Napo Wildlife Center requires substantial financial capital. However, I hope that this thesis has shown that
power does not exclusively emerge from economic privilege. While there is no question that economic unevenness is visible in the restaurant setting, the Añangu do exercise substantial agency and power in the curating of the tourism experience. I would argue, that they have appropriated the performance of tourism to realize and achieve their own goals, which is an act of self-determination. As a result of the income from tourism, on special occasions, community members will take over the restaurant, open the wine bottles, and enjoy meals cooked by the restaurant’s chefs. Tourism in Añangu is unavoidably connected to a globalized world and transnational financial capital. Participation in the tourism project inevitably produces challenges for the Añangu Community. This is made visible through difficulties presented in moving towards food sovereignty. However, this trial does not erase or overcome what the Añangu Community has been able to achieve through tourism.

Chicha alone may serve as the perfect marker of tourism’s local impact. Above all other cultural identifiers, chicha was consistently mentioned as a sign of how Kichwa-ness was being lost. However, if my observations hold any truth, the consumption of chicha has made its reappearance strongly felt. I found myself enamored with the strong, but sweet smell of chicha, which seemed to follow the Mamakunas wherever they went. On my final day of fieldwork, I joined the Mamakunas in the Kuri Muyu for one last cultural performance. As they waited to dance, I sat with Erika and Violeta while they weaved bracelets. As always, chicha managed to make its appearance. After gulping down my bowl, Linda’s two-year-
old daughter Leila began crying, she too wanted *chicha*. She happily downed a full bowl larger than her head, while surrounded by the laughter of *Mamakunas* and the *rancia* (foreign) volunteer who had become an impromptu playmate for her the past three months. If young Leila is any indication, *chicha’s* cultural presence in Añangu has a bright future.
Chapter 13
Concluding Thoughts: Community-Owned Tourism in Añangu?

In the introduction to this thesis, I asked whether community-owned tourism can, in fact, generate a more responsible or ethical form of tourism? While this discussion perhaps demands a more philosophical analysis of what the notions of responsible or ethical theoretically entail, I argue that in the case of community-owned tourism in Añangu, a more ethical tourism is, in fact, being made visible. In looking at the critiques of ecotourism and community-based tourism, I drew on Russell and Wallace, and Salazar, who in essence argued that these ethically sounding labels may ultimately obscure unethical practices (Salazar 2012, Russell and Wallace 2004). Tourists may believe that they are purchasing a product which produces social and environmental goods, but ultimately contribute to the reproduction of unfair power structures, where host communities are the victims of exploitative practices by outside agencies. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that eco-cultural tourism and community-based tourism involving businesses and non-profits are not universally exploitative. Productive and fair partnerships can and do exist (Honey 2008, Honey 2016, Stronza and Gordillo 2008).

Honey argues that certification programs can alleviate some of these manipulative practices. She argues that “Certification—as voluntary, third party, multi-stakeholder programs that award logos based on environmental, economic, and social criteria—is a tool uniquely suited to our times” (Honey 2008, 114). However, given the abundance of certification programs, there are substantial issues in standardization. The tourism business also has to be able to afford the costs of certifications and audits. Certifications are certainly an important start, however, the key is to ensure that small, truly community-based programs also have access to these certifications.
However, in analyzing ecotourism, cultural tourism, and community tourism, my research is specifically focused on the impacts of relocating the power of ownership and management within a host community. In considering the perspective of Añangu Community members, can we say that an ethical or responsible form of tourism exists in Añangu? In framing this question, I argued that is important to understand how community-tourism can contribute to self-determination. While I offered several definitions of self-determination, I find that Corntassel’s use of “sustainable self-determination” most aptly applies to the study of community-owned tourism in Añangu. To remind the reader, Corntassels proposes that sustainable self-determination is a process where “evolving indigenous livelihoods, food security, community governance, relationships to homelands and the natural world, and ceremonial life can be practiced today locally and regionally, thus enabling the transmission of these traditions and practices to future generations” (Corntassel 2008, Corntassel and Bryce 2012). He follows this up by stating that “sustainable self-determination seeks to regenerate the implementation of indigenous natural law on indigenous homelands and expand the scope of an indigenous self-determination process” (119).

When not in the hands of an Indigenous community or assembly, Indigenous cultural and ecotourism may oppose any application of Corntassel’s notion of sustainable self-determination. In these cases, tourism may become a colonial reproduction of Indigenous consumption by foreign others. For example, in the prologue, I describe my discomfort in visiting a Yagua community, living near Iquitos, Ecuador. Our tourism group snapped photos of these nearly naked bodies, despite knowing that this ancestral clothing is only used for the performance of tourism. Now, if this is an act by this Yagua community grounded in pride for their history, where they are eagerly sharing their ancestral culture with others, then the situation becomes far
more complicated. However, if this “traditional” clothing is a requirement imposed by the partnering organization, then serious ethical issues may be present, particularly if they do not pay equitably. As I looked upon the bored faces of the mothers selling blowguns and bracelets, I had the creeping feeling that the latter situation was the case. In actuality, I will never know the “truth.” I will never fully understand the relationship between this Yagua Community and tourism. That being said, simply erasing tourism from the equation is not necessarily a favorable option.

As I discussed in the livelihood sections throughout this thesis, ideal job opportunities are not always abundant in the Amazon. Is tourism better or worse than working in the extractive industries or large-scale agriculture? There is likely no universal or morally-agreeable answer, but community-owned tourism presents an interesting response. In being the owners of their tourism project, the Añangu Community has decided that tourism is the form of livelihood they currently want to pursue. In returning to Corntassel’s definition of sustainable self-determination, I have found that tourism in Añangu does contribute to the process of Indigenous self-determination because the community itself both engages in the governances of tourism, while shaping the tourism experience to achieve community goals. Ideally, this will enable the transmission of cultural practices, tied to identifying as being Kichwa Añangu, for future generations.

In proposing my theoretical framing, I discussed the notion of Indigenous community agency. I argued that it is through collective, community agency, that the Añangu are able to achieve self-determination via tourism. This collectivity is made visible through both the communal governance system and the shared cultural, ecological, and historical relations embedded in being a “people.” The community acts as collective, rather than self-interested
individuals. This governance and the practice of tourism are grounded in expressed community values, such as the passing of culture onto future generations, the celebration of ancestral lifeways, the protection of the environment, and the potential realization of long-term goals such as energy and food sovereignty. Tómas told me that:

“In the assemblies, we are always arguing. They are always going to express an opinion about any decision, to see if we have to change it, [then] we change it. If there is a problem, we fix it, that’s it. And in the assembly, everything can be resolved. For that reason, we have grown so much here.”

Communities inevitably have frictions. They should never be understood as perfectly homogenous and harmonious entities. However, in Añangu, the assemblies become the place of negotiation. It is a space where voices are heard, compromises are negotiated, and decisions are ultimately made. It is a dynamic governance process, which repeats itself on a monthly basis. Corntassel calls for the “implementation of indigenous natural law on indigenous homelands” (Corntassel 2008, 119). I would argue that this is exactly what is happening in Añangu. Their decisions are not dependent on the hegemonies created by the nation-state structure, but are instead guided by their goals, values, and ontological understandings. Of course, tourism is subject to the emerging demands of the tourism market when making decisions regarding the tourism project. However, I argue that they have been able to shape the practice of tourism and these demands in such a way that they are able to continue building their own self-determination with the goal of ultimately achieving Sumak Kawasy or the good life.

59 In Spanish: “En las asambleas, siempre estamos discutiendo. Siempre van a poner una opinión alguna decisión, si hay de cambiar, cambiamos Sí hay alguna problema arreglamos, eso es todo. Y la asamblea es todo lo que se puede solucionar. Entonces, es por eso hemos crecido también acá.”
I do not intend to romantically portray community-owned tourism in Añangu. As I have discussed throughout this thesis, the community faces several ongoing challenges. For example, like any company working in tourism, they are susceptible to market demand and must sustain viable market promotion. There is also growing competition from other ecolodges and tourism markets across nation-states. The Añangu Community constantly faces susceptibility to economic and climatic disasters. For the Añangu Community, in particular, there is the stress of knowing that petroleum rests beneath their feet. Working in tourism always requires significant dedication and long work hours. Mamakunas often do not return home until the late evening, while fathers are frequently gone. Despite wanting to become energy and food sovereign, tourism, at least in the current moment, drives the need for imported goods. Finally, the future is unknown. Will youth want to continue on with the tourism project? Will they see tourism as a means for reclaiming and shaping cultural identity and environmental stewardship?

This is a study which would benefit from both long-term and comparative research. I have attempted to capture the experience of Añangu within the present moments of my visits. However, the differences that I encountered from 2015 to 2016 show how change will be constantly ongoing in Añangu. If I returned in ten years, would tourism be described in such positive terms by community members? Will it even exist? While ethnographic writing is limited by the timing of the researcher’s visit and the inevitable biases which emerge throughout the interpretive process, this does render ethnography useless. This project is intended to have both a theoretical and applied component. From a theoretical standpoint, I am trying to understand whether community-tourism (particularly, Indigenous community-tourism) can be connected to self-determination. I hope that I have made it clear, that in the case of the Añangu, I do believe
there is a strong connection between self-determination and community-owned tourism, given the ways that the community has been able to use tourism to achieve their goals.

There are other theoretical framings and approaches which I would like to pursue with further research. For one, the story of the Mamakunas would benefit from a greater analysis of “women’s empowerment.” Rather than looking at this through the lens of Western feminism, it would beneficial to turn to Indigenous literature and research, focused on the relationship between gender and community action in an Indigenous and colonial context. Additionally, it would be fruitful to dive into the research on “the commons” (i.e. Wilson, Ostrom, and Cox 2013), which put forward principles for successful commons governance. It would be interesting to do a collaborative project with the Añangu Community, to identify which ways these rules are visible in Añangu and where shortcomings in the principles might be identified. This would provide useful and practical insights into systematically specifying how and why the Añangu Community’s governance system is quite organized and successful. Finally, it would be good to take a critical development approach to this work, by considering how *Sumak Kawsay* and grassroots action (in the sense of community-owned tourism) challenge top-down development discourses and approaches. How is local and communal action distinct from many development efforts?

In considering the values of this research from an applied anthropological perspective, I return to my conversation on the tourism industry and alternative tourisms. First of all, it is important to recognize that the notion of the “tourism industry” mischaracterizes the complexity and diversity which emerges from the practice of tourisms in different places and time. It is important to acknowledge and understand the differential impacts of various tourisms, within diverse contexts. Ecotourism in Ecuador provides an important example of this. Shortly before
leaving to the field in 2016, I read a study by Peredo et al., which was evaluating community-ownership of the Kapawi Ecolodge, located on the Achuar territory in Ecuador’s Pastaza Province (Peredo, Ordóñez and Belohrad 2015). The lodge was hugely successful (financially speaking) under Canodros, a tourism operator, who initially partnered with the association of Achuar communities who now run the lodge. Since the Achuar took over the lodge in 2008, the number of tourists has steadily declined (13-14). The reasons for this drop are complex, but some key factors cited by Peredo et al. are the need for business, managerial, technical and promotional skills; struggles with promotional and marketing tools; and disparities across the coalition of Achuar communities participating in the project.

This dim pictures contrasts sharply with the enthusiasm of a guide I had met in 2015. This *mestizo* guide from Quito excitedly told me how Kapawi was the best and most beautiful ecolodge in Ecuador. My interests was thoroughly peaked when I learned that Kapawi was also run by Indigenous communities. It is important to emphasize that Peredo et al. do emphasize several benefits or potential benefits afforded by tourism at the Kapawi Ecolodge. Several of these benefits are similar to those cited by Añangu Community members. For example, tourism has generated income for local projects, initiated a process of cultural reclamation around handicrafts, and provided job opportunities for local youth, who otherwise may have left for the city. Despite these parallels, a separate conversation I had in the summer of 2016 seemed to provide evidence that Kapawi is in trouble. Gonzalo, a *mestizo* tour guide, and Elena, who owns a tour company in Quito, told me that Kapawi was falling apart. According to them, it is “in pieces.” They expressed a certain sadness, because it was a beautiful ecolodge. Gonzalo then started comparing Kapawi to Añangu, evaluating why they were different. He emphasized that in
Añangu, community leadership was important, that the community strictly follows the rules they have established, and that they have strong community governance.

I cannot deeply comment on the comparisons between Kapawi and Añangu, because I have not visited Kapawi. Even the article by Peredo et al., lacks the voices of Achuar participants in the tourism projects. However, my point in addressing this case study is that there are a lot of similarities between these two projects. They both started out under the management of outside companies or non-profits, they both are community-owned, and they are both managed by Indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Yet, how community-owned tourism has locally played out does have its differences. For the Añangu, the Napo Cultural Center continues to have ups and downs in their number of visits, which was particularly evident following the April 2016 earthquake. However, the Napo Wildlife Center, which too suffered after the earthquake, tends to be filled to capacity. In 2016, the community opted to build more tourist cabins at both lodges, because they were frequently reaching maximum capacity. From this particular moment, it is still difficult to say what will happen with Kapawi and the Añangu’s projects in the long run. In the short term, we can see that the study of tourism and its successes and failures, requires a nuanced approach. In what ways has Añangu succeeded, where Kapawi has struggled, despite the lodges’ similarities? This is particularly important when we compare massively different tourism enterprises. It is difficult to make a responsible argument which attempts to comparably quantify tourism experiences at Disney World and Añangu. These contexts and geographies are far too different.
In returning to my discussion on the applications of my research, I am making an explicitly normative argument. Based on my ethnographic study, I am contending that at least in the case of Indigenous eco-cultural tourism, community-owned tourism has the potential to contribute to community-defined goals and self-determination. The case of Kapawi certainly shows us that community-owned tourism is not going to be a “cure-all” or universal answer for seeking Indigenous self-determination by any means. Not only does it bring inherent vulnerabilities and challenge, but it would be presumptuous and ignorant to argue that tourism is a livelihood that all other Indigenous peoples, with all of their diversity, want to engage in. Instead, I am contending that we need to take a critical look at how tourism can benefit host Indigenous communities who make the decision to engage in tourism. Not all of these communities will have the resources to be the owners and operators of their project.

The bigger question becomes (one that demands future research) what are mechanisms by which Indigenous communities, who want to engage in eco-cultural tourism, can have the resources (both monetary and educational) to run a successful project? Further research would nuance my initial project, by more concretely identifying the mechanisms which have led to the success of tourism in Añangu. I have argued that community governance and collective agency, combined with a moral conviction for using tourism as a tool have led to the Añangu’s ability to use tourism as a tool of self-determination. If the Añangu are open to more research, I am sure that differing research perspectives could deepen or even challenge my argument.
Other communities in Ecuador are pursuing community-owned tourism. Not only is the government promoting *turismo comunitario*, but communities such as the one my friend Alvaro comes from, have seen the successes in Añangu. Several of Alvaro’s fellow community members have been working at different tourism projects over the years. They feel that they have learned enough to now own and operate a successful lodge. While I am skeptical of certification programs as they stand today, I do wonder if standards could be set which would specifically identify in what ways communities are benefiting from tourism projects. My concern with community-based tourism is that it obscures on the ground realities for host communities. If there was a certification that explicitly demonstrated community-ownership, would this at all impact how tourists purchased their tourism packages? Is community-ownership an aspect many tourists even care about? That being said, what damage might this form of label cause to communities who have equitable relationships with partnering organizations and business? Could there be a certification which identified how communities are engaged? If so, how could this be made affordable, accessible, and fair? Earlier, I provided a brief and incomplete history on the study of tourism within anthropology. The point of this discussion and my questions is to demonstrate how much work is left to be done within the field of the anthropology of tourism. There are always new inquiries that should be asked and perspectives which need to be addressed. I believe that ethnographic research provides a particular rich approach to data collection which emphasizes the lived experiences of people interacting with tourism across spectrums of engagement. Anthropologists have the capacity to provide the personalized insight of receiving communities, laborers, tourists, agencies, businesses, and any other individuals who are intimately connected or impacted by the tourism industry.
At the beginning of this thesis, I included some fairly shocking statistics from the United Nation’s World Tourism Organization. Once again, in 2015, the UNWTO found that tourism is employing 1 in 11 people around the globe and the industry currently makes up 9% of the world’s GDP (UNWTO 2016). All of these numbers are projected to continue growing. Ecuador will likely not be an exception to this projection. If the government pushes forward with its commitment to support and expand the tourism industry as a key export product, it is likely that tourism will become increasingly important to the lives of more Ecuadorians. This is a reality that anthropologists and social science researchers should not ignore. No matter what our opinions of tourism are, it will not be disappearing anytime soon. In his introductory text, Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction, Paul Robbins argues that the field of political ecology has functioned as a “hatchet, cutting and pruning away the stories, methods and policies that create pernicious social and environmental outcomes.” However, he argues that political ecology should also function as a seed, which is “making space for, and nurturing, other possibilities (planting intellectual and practical seeds).” Political ecology research should help “plant the seeds for reclaiming and asserting alternative ways” (Robbins 2012, 98-99).

This hatchet and seed metaphor is pivotal for applied anthropological research. We can deconstruct, but we should also build. We should apply our critical thinking skills not only to critically analyze cultural tensions, but to also actively think about alternative realities. Again, tourism is not going to disappear anytime soon. I advocate that as researchers, we need to consider what better tourism looks like in partnership and collaboration with host communities.
There will always be faults in the tourism industry, but millions, if not billions of lives are entangled in the practice of tourism, either as providers or consumers (or oftentimes both). Again, I am not contending that community-owned tourism is going to fix the many shortcomings which emerge within Indigenous tourism or eco-cultural tourism more broadly. However, I do believe that the case study of tourism in Añangu is a step forward in considering what a more ethical or responsible form of tourism could look like for a host community.

I want to finish by sharing a final anecdote. Joining the Mamakunas at Kuri Muyu, on my last day of my fieldwork, I too was dressed in ropa típica. As I was doing a photo session with Leila and Carla, whose mothers would soon be dancing, several Mamakunas started to yell “Sarah Muyu, Sarah Muyu, Sarah Muyu.” I quickly realized that they were beckoning me to come over. They wanted me to do the first dance with them, the dance which the tourists would only be watching. I had danced dozens of times that summer, but always during the second dance, the participatory one. I became immediately nervous and awkwardly began thinking that the tourists would be frustrated that a white girl from the United States was a part of their cultural performance. Nonetheless, there was no way I could or would turn down the Mamakunas. I did not do half bad considering I had never practiced the steps. By the time we came to the second dance, I was again knocked out of my comfort zone, when the Mamakunas had me be one of the dancers who invites the tourists to participate. Again, I worried that I was “ruining” their authentic experience. After surviving and ultimately enjoying my dance experience, I spent the remainder of the afternoon moving between tears and laughter, while hiding from the rain with Mamakunas in the laundry room.
The following morning, the time had come to say goodbye. With help of my good friend Alvaro, I had prepared some words to say to the Mamakunas in Kichwa as we stood on shores of the Napo River, waiting for our canoe to arrive:

“Ashka pagrachu mashicuna kai Anangullactamanda. Kanguna nukara apishcamanda ashcara pagarachuni.”

“Thank you my friends from the Añangu Community. You welcomed me into this community and I am very thankful.”

As the tears began to flow all of the way around, we heard Jacobo, who had just taken a picture of the group begin to laugh. He was looking at the German tourists who had danced with me the day before. They too were crying. Despite not knowing my relationship with the Mamakunas, they had been brought into the emotions of the moment. Later, when I arrived with them to Coca City, they told me how happy they had been that I participated in the dance with the Mamakunas. They had seen that a difficult goodbye was going on before their eyes. In full disclosure, I am evening tearing up as I write these final words. I am writing this final anecdotal not purely to share how close my connection was with the Mamakunas or how much I miss my friends from Añangu, but to highlight one final time the complexities that underlie the practice of tourism. Behind all of the discussion and critiques of eco-cultural tourism, there are living, breathing people who are interacting with and learning from one other. Just as host communities should not be reduced to passive victims, tourists should not be reduced
to uncritical consumers. After completing my field work in the Kichwa Añangu Community, I sincerely believe that for some communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, community-owned eco-cultural tourism might open the door to a livelihood of creative opportunities. On that note, I once again say Ashka Pagrachu Añangu, thank you Añangu.

Saying Goodbye – Chishicama Mashicunas
Añangu 2016
(Photo Credit: Jairo Chimbo)
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