Selling culture? Between commoditisation and cultural control in Indigenous alternative tourism

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Abstract: Indigenous cultures are significant for tourism but their owners have been systematically excluded from its benefits and control. To counteract this tendency, some indigenous organisations are becoming tourist agents offering alternative eco-cultural tourism. Their niche market has social and ecological consciousness but influenced by postcolonialist ideologies it still expects culture to be “authentic”. To succeed, indigenous organisations need to manage tensions between their own culture and identities and what the market demands. Applying the notion of cultural control, in this article I evaluate how alternative projects in Mexico and Peru deal with the challenge of commoditising culture and nature on their own terms. To understand the paradoxes they face, I analyse their cultural representations, organisational identities and alliances through an ethnographic reading of their Web-stories.

Key Words: Alternative tourism; Indigenous peoples; Nature/Culture Nexus; Eco-Cultural tourism; Commoditisation/authenticity; Mexico; Peru.

1. Introduction

The cultural and natural resources of Indigenous peoples have been an important contribution to Latin America tourism. Countries such as Mexico and Peru possess a rich prehispanic cultural history and heritage located in the territories of contemporary indigenous peoples and surrounded by nature. These cultural resources represent an important aspect of the identities of these countries and are used to attract tourism. However, contemporary Indigenous peoples, the inheritors of such rich culture, have been mostly excluded from the...
design and management of tourism activities, and from their economic benefits. They have been involved as cheap labour in the hospitality tourist industry, their images are marketed to the tourist, they perform representations of their culture and produce souvenirs; however, it is primarily the non-Indigenous tourist agents who have attained the economic benefits. Furthermore, it is these agents who have defined how Indigenous cultures and identities are commoditised to become an attractive commercial product of tourism.

These representations promoted by tourist agents commonly exclude Indigenous peoples’ views on their culture and identities, and as such it is possible to claim that they have been constructed under postcolonial ideologies (Hall and Tucker 2004). This marginalised position of Indigenous groups in the area of tourism is no different to their position in other social spaces in these countries. The political and economic history, shaped by colonisation and neo-colonial forces, has marginalised the Indigenous peoples in various aspects of their social life. Indigenous peoples worldwide represent the most dispossessed sectors in their societies; nevertheless, at the same time they paradoxically trigger the Western fascination with otherness.

This paradox has been long questioned by postcolonial theories, under the influence of Said’s work (1978) and his concept of “orientalism”. Said considers orientalism “as a discourse that worked through a representation of space in which the Orient was constructed as a theatrical stage on which the Occident projected its own fantasies and desires” (pp. 54-5). This notion has been applied to different aspects of culture beyond the Orient, in particular to indigenous peoples and other subaltern groups (Minh-ha, 1989). It has played an important role in the reproduction of colonial power following the end of colonialism. Postcolonialist representations of the previously colonised “other” also abound in the present relationships both between and within countries (Krishnaswami and Hawley, 2007), and are particularly relevant in the context of tourism (Palacios, 2010; Amoamo and Thompson 2010; Hall and Tucker, 2004), whose foundation rests on the contradiction between authenticity and commercialisation of culture and intercultural relations between the West and the Other (Amoamo, 2007).

As in other parts of the world, in Latin America it is possible to claim that traditional representations of Indigenous peoples in tourism have been defined by these Postcolonialist ideologies (Grünewald 2002). Tourism promotions of these countries in local, national and international travel agencies are full of representations that stereotype Indigenous peoples as “exotic”, “mysterious”, timeless “authentic”, and almost indistinguishable from nature (see for example Hervik’s analysis of the “mysterious Maya”, 1999). The culture and identities of these people are reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold. In a context in which these Indigenous peoples have been politically marginalised and socially disadvantaged, tourism through governmental or private organisations has continuously excluded their agency. For the most part, they do not have a voice and thus it is other sectors that capture the economic benefits from the tourist activities in their territories (Nash 1994).

In the last decades, such treatment of Indigenous peoples has been questioned by many Indigenous and pro-Indigenous organisations throughout the world (as examples see http://www.amnesty.org.au/indigenous-rights; specific to tourism http://www.veoverde.com/2012/02/safaris-humanos-entoturismo-o-exploitation-indigena). This has opened up new possibilities for Indigenous peoples worldwide to demand an active role in reclaiming control of their cultures and territories and demanding their rights for political citizenship (Butler and Hinch, 2007). The increasing importance of these movements and the global discourses associated with social justice, social responsibility and ethical trade represent new opportunities for indigenous organisations to become involved in international trade, including in the area of tourism.

In this political and ideological global context, alternative forms of involvement of Indigenous peoples have emerged as a way to counter the typical involvement of Indigenous peoples in tourism (see Buultjens and Fuller 2004). Alternative tourism can be characterised as self-managed tourism projects or social enterprises run by communities or some of their members under globally defined forms of ethical and sustainable tourism. Through the emergence of alternative tourism projects, the Indigenous peoples can resist their cultural exclusion, and are beginning to take control of tourist access to their communities as well as defining how their culture can or cannot be commercialised ( Nielsen and Wilson, 2012). In addition, to some degree, they are avoiding their exploitation as labour force by external tourist agents. These initiatives are the focus of this paper.

In this paper I use the concepts of postcolonialism and cultural control as the
A virtual approach to Indigenous tourism

For this paper I have analysed a number of alternative tourism initiatives in Mexico and Peru, given the importance of Indigenous peoples in these countries in shaping the national identity and thus also their contribution to the tourist industry. I selected 6 cases in each country as the basis for my analysis. All cases are self-managed by organisations that identify themselves as Indigenous. In the case of Peru, the term Indigenous is not so common, used only to refer to Amazonian tribes. However, I included other communities which represent themselves as members of ethnic groups or heirs of the ancestral cultures of the Incas. All Mexican cases use the term ‘Indigenous’ plus a specific ethnic group name to define their offerings. The twelve projects operate in different regions that have been involved in conventional tourism corridors, where Indigenous peoples are numerically significant. The focus of the analysis of the projects included Webpage versions available online between September 2009 and December 2010, last accessed in May 2013. Some of the organisations and tourist initiatives in Mexico were previously studied (Author 2003; 2006; 2007; 2008). However, for this paper the focus is on their Web representations.

The study of the 12 organisations was done using a semiotic-discursive critical analysis (Hodge & Kress 1988; 1993; Carbó 2001) of the Webpages produced by the organisations that offer the tourism projects (Author, 2009b). The Webpages of the organisations are considered as hypertexts of meaning, i.e. a set of interlinked texts (Snyder 1996) each of which contain a web of meanings represented in different modes: verbal and visual, still and moving. In some cases it is possible to include as part of the hypertext different representations of the projects from the Webpages of the partners or supporting organisations as hyperlinks or indirect searches of the organisations mentioned in the projects. The texts which constitute the hypertext come from different producers and include contextualised stories, ideological discourses, organisational culture representations and self-representation as marketing (See Author & Fallon 2011).

These pages were analysed through a method I call ethnography of texts (Author, 2009a). This method is based on the assumption that all producers of text are quotidian reflective analysts who observe, classify, analyse and synthesise the surrounding social, cultural and political reality. From this reflective practice, in negotiation with others, the producers of texts communicate the complexity of their reality as they see it. In this sense, the texts produced can be regarded as ethnographic reports of their activities and the cultural, social, economic and political environments in which they interact with others inside and outside their communities. In this case, the others include the potential and actual tourists and supporters.

From this assumption, all the stories about the indigenous communities and organisations and the marketing strategies represented in these texts were considered to be ethnographic maps of cultural and organisational meanings. Their analysis allowed the identification of the complexity involved in the representation of their organisational strategies, their politics of cultural representation and most importantly it uncovered the implicit and explicit ideologies from visual and verbal texts (see also Murthy 2008 on virtual ethnography and Jones 1999 on Internet Research). For this paper the analytical focus was on the cultural aspects involved in the representations of culture and identity through tourist offerings managed by the Indigenous peoples themselves.

The analysis of Webpages and hyperlinks was guided by the research question: How are culture and identity represented to the tourist when the cultural producers exercise control? On this basis I began the research with the assumption that even if the community organisations were able to exercise their agency and have cultural control over their initiatives, as part of the tourist industry, they would nevertheless be
under the pressures of global tourism and as such would also be exposed to deeply internalised postcolonialist ideologies that have traditionally represented their cultures and way of life as exotic, mysterious, primitive and closer to nature (Ryan and Aicken 2005).

3. Postcolonialism versus Cultural Control

Postcolonial theorists influenced by the work of Said (1978) have denounced the cultural appropriation of the culture and identity of the colonised “other” by Western societies. For example, Hodge and Mishra (1991: xiii) conceptualise Orientalism as “a class of strategies that colonial powers have adopted to construct the colonised peoples. These strategies however, did not disappear at the end of colonisation, but were reproduced under post-colonial societies”. Postcolonial strategies can be identified in many forms of intercultural encounters, both at the national level and within the global scope (Westwood, 2006). In some ways global discourses and relationships are still defined by orientalist views of colonised societies under geopolitical representations such as the East-West or North-South dichotomies.

Relevant to the tourism focus of this paper is the double movement that is characteristic of postcolonialist ideologies: “a fascination with the culture of the colonised along with a suppression of their capacity to speak or truly know it” (Hodge & Mishra, 1991: 27). In similar ways, the postcolonialist ideologies of tourism represent Indigenous peoples from the dominant Western perspective, excluding their voice and emphasising their cultural essentialism. Such representations assume that these peoples’ real identities and cultural practices lack complexity and dynamism.

The postcolonial critique, however, does not offer many alternatives when dealing with the area of tourism in which the reproduction of postcolonialist images, even if decided by cultural producers, would be easily interpreted as merely the colonisation of the mind. This involves dynamic processes where practices are transformed out of the cultural matrix, the deep culture, which is the one which integrates and gives a sense of continuity to their cultural practices. The transformation can simultaneously include different processes, among them the reproduction and/or refunctionalisation of existent practices, the appropriation of new practices, the innovation of, and even the decision to renounce, cultural meanings. Within the framework of cultural control in the area of tourism, decisions about which of these processes are used falls into the hands of the indigenous communities and organisations involved in the construction of cultural representations for the sake of tourism.

4. Tourism Paradoxes and Contradictions

In the area of cultural tourism, the tourist industry encounters a paradoxical demand: to generate cultural representations which simultaneously include the authentic cultural meanings as well as being attractive to the demands of tourists. This paradox is inherent in the contradictory discourse of tourism in which the expectation is that the culture to be commercialised as a tourist product is the one that has been preserved and therefore this is the one that is considered authentic, at least in terms of tourist expectations. In this discourse, the complexities of culture from the cultural producers’ perspective are excluded. The tourist product is equated to a lifeless object as if time has been frozen in the pre-modern era.

This contradiction links also with the controversial issue of the impact of tourism on the local culture of tourist destinations. Some
scholars highlight the negative impacts in which the commercialisation of culture itself transforms the culture and therefore what is offered becomes inauthentic (see Wilson 2008). Others, however, have found evidence of positive impacts of tourism on the revitalisation of cultural practices and languages, which otherwise were in the process of disappearing due to social and economic modernisation of communities, unrelated to tourism (for example Greathouse-Amador 2005). What is clear from this controversy is the possibility that tourism can produce opposite effects, which is consistent with the complex dynamic of intercultural exchanges, which can produce different forms in which tourists experience what they perceive as authentic (see Wang 1999).

These tourism paradoxes are also prevalent in alternative projects, which are exposed to similar market forces to conventional tourism. This is evident, for example, in the language used by REDTOURS, an important network organisation of indigenous groups offering tourist products in different countries of Latin America (see Maldonado 2007). In their Code of Conduct for rural communitarian tourism, they provide some “Guidelines for preserving authenticity and valuing the rich cultural heritage of tourism host communities”:

“Tourism must be an instrument for preserving local cultures and for revitalising values and expressions of ethnic and communitarian identity. Their organisations will take care of the integrity and authenticity of cultural heritage; avoiding commercial pressures to harm or misrepresent it... they will promote the historic and cultural heritage, including experiential activities that value their agronomic, culinary, craft and artistic traditions as a response to tourists’ expectations”. (OIT-REDTURS 2007, my translation and my emphasis in italics)

Even if the paradox still exists in alternative tourism, a distinction is also evident in the above quote in terms of the importance of “avoiding commercial pressures to harm or misrepresent it”; i.e. their emphasis is on the challenge of exercising cultural control. Although in this case the tourist offer tries to capture a niche market attracted to the uniqueness of non-mass-tourism, this unfortunately does not mean that this sector is excluded from expectations influenced by the same mass tourism they are trying to avoid.

Another contradiction inherent in the tourism activity is the relationship between the tourist and the Indigenous people involved in it. The interdependence of tourism on the hospitality industry has limited how the relationship between travellers and recipient communities is defined. This includes the assumed host/guest relationship. This pair of terms is controversial in itself and in its use. Its meaning has transformed over time. Originally ‘host’ and ‘guest’ come from the same Latin root, hōpes, and both are related to the meaning, stranger. In the linguistic form, there is, however, a subjacent power relation. It contains the same root of hostility and therefore carries with it a negative ideological interpretation of the stranger as the other. The host is then the “lord of strangers” and the guest is the stranger, the enemy (see http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=host).

Currently, the meaning of the term has been transformed. When inserted in the commercial exchange the relationship has been inverted: it refers to a hospitable relation, a friendly one, in which the host is expected to be “friendly” to the guest, the stranger, and it is the guest who becomes the “lord”. Although the terms used in the context of the hospitality industry seem to be straightforward, in the context of Indigenous tourism the way in which Indigenous peoples have been involved make the use of these terms problematic. Unless we apply them literally and recognise the power of the Indigenous host (at least in their own homes) over the stranger, the tourist, the use of this language implies a reciprocal relationship that covers over what has been in fact an exploitative relationship in which Indigenous peoples are the servants of the beneficiaries of the exchange, in a commercial relationship.

Both binaries, authenticity/commercialisation and host/guest, represent the main challenges Indigenous peoples confront when involved in tourism activities. To counteract internalised postcolonialist ideologies prevalent in the tourist markets, Indigenous peoples have to implement cultural control over the tourist offering and transform the established asymmetrical relationship into a real host position, as “lords of strangers”. For this to be achieved it is necessary to recognise the commercial quality of the exchange between provider and customer as equal to a contractual relationship, and the importance of inverting the assumed power relations in which the Indigenous communities have been regarded as subordinate to external interests. The transformation of the agency of Indigenous peoples can be seen as subjacent to the aims of alternative tourism in Latin America.
In my view this needs to be seen as involving more than is implied in the term ‘participant communities’ since participation does not necessarily mean empowerment (see Cole 2006). In Table 1 I highlight the contrast between conventional tourism and Indigenous alternative tourism in terms of the emergent changes produced by the capacity of Indigenous peoples to take control of their cultural representation. The use of the cultural control perspective introduces a significant difference between the two forms of tourism. Although the discourse of authenticity prevails, the appropriation of that discourse brings significant changes to the definition of what is regarded as authentic and how this culture is represented as a commercial product. Similarly the host/guest relation is transformed by the control of the Indigenous communities over the use of their territories and the behaviour of tourists in these territories.

Contrary to the common practice of travel agents, who organise tours to visit the communities as if in a display, in the alternative tourism initiatives, the presence of the tourist seem to be managed by the indigenous organisations, on their own terms (see for example the case of Tosepan Kali tourist activities http://www.tosepankali.com/indexa.html). The power position is inverted and, at least during the tourist exchange, they are regarded as the ones who make the relevant decisions concerning how the tourist is involved with their communities. As we will see later, this does not exclude the potential involvement of external travel agencies but rather provides a form of engagement that creates opportunities for indigenous communities to access a larger proportion of the economic benefits and exert more cultural control.

The emergence of alternative forms of tourism in which Indigenous peoples become the agents does not imply complete autonomy. Indigenous organisations in charge of these initiatives are still dependent on multiple sectors, and therefore they are exposed to implicit and explicit pressures to behave ‘adequately’ according to various ideologies and interests. This includes not just cultural expectations but also the fulfilment of regulations that apply to any other tourism enterprise. Indigenous organisations are accountable to a multiplicity of stakeholders. These can include local to global governmental, business and non-governmental organisations, within international and local broad and niche markets. Also, in tension with all these external forces it is important to consider the pressures from within the communities which can be, directly or indirectly, involved or affected by the tourist activities. Unless the activities are decided collectively there is potential for conflicts to emerge between different sectors of the community who are unequally benefitted or affected.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Frame</th>
<th>Tourism under Postcolonialism</th>
<th>Tourism under Indigenous Cultural Control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Authentically associated with the notion of purity, even if it is apparent in most cases that the 'authentic' is only an adaptation and even an invention for tourist entertainment.</td>
<td>The “authentic” is what the community decides autonomously, no matter if it is historically their own or appropriated from other cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host/Guest</td>
<td>Metaphor which hides power relations in which external agents and tourists consume culture, nature &amp; services. Indigenous Peoples are 'hosts' as defined by tourism agents: providing low paid services, encountering tourists in their communities with travel agents' permission.</td>
<td>Represented as 'friends', Indigenous organisations &amp; community members define the activities and forms of participation in their communities and territories. Explicit codes of conduct.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous Involvement</td>
<td>”This traditional market functions in a speculative way, informally, through extensive chains of intermediation and mainly away from ethical principles, since the profits of the commerce people are based on the undervaluation of our labour force [Indigenous peoples]” (<a href="http://www.es.minkafairtrade.com">www.es.minkafairtrade.com</a>)</td>
<td>Rural &amp; small groups. Services provided in the communities’ territory. Personalised close interaction. Social &amp; ecological low impact. Ethical and sustainable niche markets. Culture and Knowledge as ecological value.</td>
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In the next section I will briefly present some case studies and outline the research approach I used to explore the way in which Indigenous organisations are participating in the tourist industry in the offering of alternative Indigenous eco-cultural tourism. Following this, I will discuss the impact of collaboration on how communities engage in tourism, and how they manage the tensions between postcolonialist demands and indigenous cultural control.

5. Indigenous alternative tourism Web case studies

The tourist projects included in Mexico show an involvement in multiple networks including NGOs, governmental programs and links with local and regional organisations. As cooperatives they have a long tradition of struggle for economic sustainability and political autonomy. Some of them in fact are part of the organisational strategies of well-established organisations in which the building capacity is based on the constant emergence of economic projects involving different sectors of the communities and continuous application for funding of their initiatives through their solidarity networks, which they have set up as productive cooperatives. In relation to the tourist initiatives, these organisations are beginning to operate as micro-enterprises, which implies a different legal framework defining some forms of operation which might conflict with the cooperative values. This aspect was not extensively researched but it

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<tr>
<td>1. Proyecto Ecoturístico Latuvi, Sierra Norte de Oaxaca, Oaxaca</td>
<td>Indigenous people: Zapotec Mancomunados towns as one of the most salient examples of communitarian social organisations in Mexico</td>
<td>Pueblos Mancomunados CNDI-PATZI Comisión de Cooperación Ambiental (CCA),</td>
<td>Ecotourism as a model for regional development and education. 4 cottages, hosted for 16 persons, communitarian dining room, fish farms, camping, steam bath service (temascal), 7 walking routes guided by the town residents themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proyecto Ecoturístico Capulapam, Capulapam de Méndez, Oaxaca</td>
<td>Indigenous people: Zapotec “Magic Town” community surrounded by a beautiful cultural and natural frame, civil and religious traditional architecture with colonial time influences</td>
<td>Pueblos Mancomunados CNDI-PATZI RITA</td>
<td>Cultural: Architecture and customs. 5 restaurants with traditional menus, room with equipment for multiple functions, mountain bike rent, communitarian guides, treatment plan of residual waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Proyecto Ecoturístico Misol-Ha, Ejido San Miguel, Salto de Agua, Chiapas</td>
<td>Indigenous people: Ch’ol Language and culture vitality, rituals and festivities</td>
<td>CNDI-PATZI DTG Mexico Radical Marketing México Travel Club</td>
<td>Cultural, ecological, adventure and education. 11 cottages, restaurant, camping area, parking, toilets and change rooms, playground, handicraft shop, breeding pool for mojarra tilapia fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cabañas Ecológicas Uh Nají Ek Balam, Ejido XKumil, Municipio Temozon Ek Balam, Yucatán</td>
<td>Indigenous people: Maya Traditional culture, Archaeology, strong internal organisation, strong capacities for the conservation of cultural and biological diversity</td>
<td>CNDI-PATZI RITA</td>
<td>Cultural, archaeological and nature Cottages, camping area, Lookout to the archaeological site, tours to the archaeological site, visit to caves in cenotes and corn land fields. Kayaks, snorkel, rappel &amp; Tyrolean, Interpretative walks and steam bath service (temascal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Proyecto Ecoturístico Tospekanik, Nahuiopan, Cuetzalan Puebla</td>
<td>“Magic Town” Nahua Culture, tradition and nature of indigenous peoples who still keep their roots and traditions</td>
<td>CNDI-PATZI Cooperative Tosepán Titataniske</td>
<td>Culture, Nature: Eco- Archaeology, Natural and interpretative walks, guided visits, horse riding, Cottages, Cabafias, steam bath service (temascal), sharing life experience with craft producers, weavers and gastronomy tasting</td>
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<td>6. Red Regional Totalitikpak, Alternative Tourism Net Totalitikpak: Zacapoaxtla, Xochitlán Cuetzalan, Yohualichan Zapotitlán e Ixtépec, Puebla</td>
<td>Nahust Indigenous community from Cuetzalan, Puebla, land of traditions, natural beauties, prehispanic and colonial architectonic jewels</td>
<td>Caminos de Heredadura: Riding and hiking guides; Teht-Tlan, (ecotural); Chiaurime (restaurant managed by women); Xitl (adventure tourism); Tselotzin (hotel), Ueyxoololal. (Guides group) Red Indígena de Turismo Alternativo (RITA)</td>
<td>Culture and ecotourism. Adventure tourism and sustainable rural tourism, archaeological sighting, boats, 3 star hotel, typical cuisine restaurant, event rooms, tours to caves and waterfalls, horse riding, rappel, camping</td>
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is an important aspect to consider regarding the tensions between different stakeholders' demands.

In the case of Peru there is no clear support from the government (see also MINCETUR 2009) and thus the organisations included in the study have developed out of collaborations with the private sector, particularly from socially responsible businesses and travel agencies that profit from the organisation of tours in the Indigenous territories. From the information provided in the Web it is possible to infer that in these cases the tours are operated under the management of the local communities. The main contribution of the private enterprises is in the international exposure of the alternative options, and sometimes, their involvement in training the local agents. These cases also collaboration from external international agencies which have been involved in the process of development of these organisations.

Table 2 includes the list of alternative projects considered in Mexico, with their main characteristics, and Table 3 represents the cases studied in Peru. Appendix 1 contains the list of Web addresses associated with promotion of the different alternative projects.

In both countries, alternative tourism initiatives show an involvement in the ethical niche market both in terms of their potential

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<tr>
<td>1. Amazon Lodges: Posada y Refugio Amazonas y Rooms in the Research Centre Tambopata, Province of Tambopata, Amazon Jungle, Perú</td>
<td>Indigenous community. The native community of Inferno brings together communitarian people with riverside traditions and settlers traditions</td>
<td>Rainforest Expeditions and Naturamazone</td>
<td>Spiritual/religious tourism, adventure, sports (bike riding), ecology, education and research, “Health, wellbeing and Spa”. Canopy, tours, birds sighting, promenades, hiking. Visit to the conservation of nature projects, Hostel, Bed &amp; Breakfast, Lodge, Scientific Station (30 + 32 rooms) and dining room</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Chiquía Taquile (Verdad Taquile) Province of Puno, District of Amantani</td>
<td>Peasant community, they carry in their blood the origins of the Quechua ethnic group, in a typical Aymara region</td>
<td>MINKA</td>
<td>Nature, history y living culture, pre-Inca ruins (ceremonial centres, agriculture terraces). Hosted in the houses of the community members. Guides. Fishing and hiking, kayak, boats. Communitarian handicraft shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intihuatana-Cuzco. Incas' Sacred Valley Province of Calca, District of Cuzco,</td>
<td>Indigenous peasants, heirs of our Inca and pre-Inca ancestors.</td>
<td>MINKA</td>
<td>Responsible and solidary tourism, experiential and sight of landscapes. Visits to communities (each one specialises in the elaboration of different handicrafts). Houses are prepared to receive visits, they have water, electricity and hot showers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Asociación Cuyoquiyayi. Campesino Community of Vicos Province de Carhua, Districto Ancash</td>
<td>People proud of their own cultural past and with strong beliefs in the Andean religion</td>
<td>Centre for Responsible Tourism Yachaqui Wayñi Mountain Institute</td>
<td>Experiential tourism, Traditional Medicine, personal attention from a family in a separate room attached to the house. Meals prepared with local products Cultural Museum “Elders’ House”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Asociación Huascar Huandi Province de Yungay, Distrito Ancash</td>
<td>Peasant community “United we will win”</td>
<td>Centre for Responsible Tourism Yachaqui Wayñi</td>
<td>Ecotourism, panoramic visit to the mountain ranges. Living with and learning through agricultural activities. Guides and natural and cultural interpretation</td>
</tr>
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clients and as recipients of funding support for the broad aims of the organisation. In this context a significant collaborator is the Fair Trade sector. Although in Mexico some of the root organisations are also involved in Fair Trade regarding other products such as coffee, in the area of tourism Fair Trade is not yet as relevant or visible in Peru. In Peru, Fair Trade involvement was disproportionately associated with handicraft production, gradually followed by tourist activities. There are consequently expectations concerning how the organisations are represented to the tourism, ethical and philanthropic markets. In this sense the Indigenous and the organisations’ identities are both part of the representation of the product offered through these WebPages. These representations are included in the judgement of the “quality” standards. It is not just how they manage the “business” but also how the organisation operates in cultural and social terms. What in commercial offerings of tourism can be regarded as the back stage (Goffman 1956), i.e. what is invisible to the audience but crucial for the performance to achieve client satisfaction, in these cases acquires visibility through marketing, where web representations of the commodity are part of the front stage, the performance of ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, D. 1973).

The representation of the characteristics of the organisations introduces other aspect of postcolonialist ideologies. In these, Indigenous organisations are depicted as collective, harmonious and nature friendly. In fact these characteristics are embedded in the ‘authentic tourist product’, consistent with the idea of cultural preservation that includes not only the material culture but the collective values and social behaviours that produce the ‘natural’ hospitableness of the host. In the next section I evaluate some of the differences emerging from the data in terms of the kinds of collaborations the projects promote. It is important to point out that the existence of collaborations does not imply a black and white situation in which some alliances mean control and others indicate lack of control. Nor can a direct correlation be suggested between postcolonial representations and types of stakeholder. As will be discussed in the following section, the dynamics are in fact more complex although it is evident through the cases that it is possible to identify various tendencies in terms of how indigenous cultures and identities are marketed in tourism through the Web.

6. Impact of organisational alliances on cultural control

The fact that the pressures of the tourist and ethical and philanthropic markets also reproduce the postcolonialist representations might be interpreted as a counterforce to Indigenous cultural control. As such, how these projects engage with their clients and donors represents a key element of the evaluation of how culture and identity are constructed as tourist commodities under the control of the cultural producers engaged with multiple stakeholders (Amaya Loustaunau, 2007). As mentioned above, these stakeholders exercise pressures, whether directly or indirectly, based on their own interests and values. Consequently, it is expected that the capacity for achieving cultural control and for appropriating or rejecting the postcolonialist representations might differ depending on the network strategies of the organisations: who they ally themselves with. It is also important to consider the political histories through which these organisations have already attained (or failed to attain) some level of empowerment and experience in their engagement with various stakeholders. This contributes to their capacity to manage relationships with other stakeholders more independently (see Frooman, 1999 regarding multiple stakeholder influences).

Historically, solidarity with Indigenous peoples and organisations such as cooperatives and social enterprises has included different social, political, religious and environmental organisations and individuals. This kind of solidarity is mentioned in the Webpages of alternative tourism with reference to funding bodies or as working in collaboration to make the alternative tourism projects commercially and environmentally viable. In their stories it is evident that Indigenous organisations involved in alternative tourism have emerged out of a long tradition of partnerships with various types of governmental, non-governmental or not-for-profit organisations. These organisations have supported them through different kinds of programs that focus on various forms of improvement of the conditions of life of Indigenous communities. Some supporters have focussed on the developmental agendas and have funded projects for economic and social development, including health, education and productivity based activities. Tourism is an example of this. These kinds of support simultaneously bring the risk of intervention and therefore reduction of Indigenous cultural control. Based on the analysis of Webpages...
in Figure 1, I represent some of the multiple stakeholder networks that can be seen as part of indigenous organisational alliances which simultaneously generate pressure and possibilities of empowerment.

Besides the local and global stakeholders from important tourism niche markets, it is common to find other groups contributing to the tourist initiatives in the cases studied. Among these, it is possible to mention the global and local tourism industry, for example in Misol Ha in Chiapas, Mexico; global developmental agencies as in the case of Anapia y Yuspiqui in Peru; and national developmental programs, which is the situation in many alternative projects in Mexico that have been supported by the Program of Alternative Tourism in Indigenous Zones (PATZI-CDI).

The contributions of national and international academic institutions have also been significant. For example, in Peru I found collaborations between The Mountain Institute and the community of Vicos and the Amazon Lodges, which includes as part of its tourist package accommodation in the Tambopata Research Center in the Amazon jungle. This is also the case in Mexico, for example, in the area of Cuetzalan, Puebla, where the communities have received support from the Agronomic University of Chapingo or the social services provided by other universities. Their contributions have made the continuous development of projects possible. These include also the Tospankali initiative and the creation of the Totatikpac A.C. network⁴ (see Author, 2003; Pérez Serrano et al. 2009). Some of these alliances are incidental but others show a continuous commitment to support or demand that the organisations accomplish their expectations under the terms provided by the different donors, or commercial or social partners.

Other forms of relationship relevant for the shape of cultural representations involve horizontal alliances. These might be as members of regional grassroots organisations, such as cooperatives or political fronts, inter-community networks, and relationships between intra-community sectors. The case of RETA Totaltikpac A.C. is an example of intercommunity alliances to create a more diversified tourist product, including activities such as horse rides, walking tours, cave excursions and typical restaurants and accommodation, all of them managed by different community groups (see promotional video in You Tube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZHUiXYNh28).

Finally, the members of the communities from where the projects have emerged are highly important stakeholders. In these cases, it is relevant to take into account the different groups directly or indirectly affected or involved. This can be considered an area of potential tension and of negotiations which influence not just the capacity to exercise cultural control but also for determining which groups will benefit inside the community.

Currently another important alliance between alternative Indigenous projects and commercial interests is the link with Fair Trade, and through this, with the ethical niche market...
(Nicholls & Opal, 2006; Renard and Pérez Grovas, 2007). Independently of controversies about who benefits from the Fair Trade global system – the intermediaries, the businesses involved or the communities (Raynolds et al. 2007) – the existence of its social bonus approach represents, for these kinds of Indigenous groups, not only the potential to access international markets without the mediation of rapacious brokers (in this case for-profit tourism agencies), but it also provides credit and community benefits otherwise inaccessible to these disadvantaged groups. Fair Trade can also be seen as part of solidarity movements based on ideological agendas linked to social justice, and hence the tourist initiatives managed by indigenous communities under these schemes attract a number of social activists and solidarity groups, both as supporters and as intended or unintended tourists (see Author 2008).

Each of these alliances represents a particular pressure on how the Indigenous project is expected to represent its culture and identity, and to take control of the management of the tourist product. From the web-analysis of the projects which have different kinds of partners (conveying dissimilar representations of the same organisation), it is possible to identify some indicative patterns among the whole range of organisations studied that allow the representation of various tendencies. These include a range that goes from the most postcolonialist representations to those which indicate the strongest cultural control. The relationship between the kind of alliance and the tendencies of representation are shown in Figure 2 below.

From the patterns found it is possible to recognise an association between postcolonialist representations and global power, including within this the governmental and commercial forces. The less powerful and more local agencies are, the more they appear to be associated with the promotion of Indigenous cultural control. This does not exclude the existing acceptance of those pressures based on the assumptions of what organisations need to achieve their success in the international markets, which have already been influenced by postcolonialist ideologies.

7. Patterns emerging from the Web Analysis

Independently of the variation of pressures that organisations are under, due to their alliances and the specific characteristics of each of the projects in terms of their different involvement in the tourist industry, it is possible to identify some common patterns in the Indigenous alternative initiatives in both countries. Most of the cases analysed emerged emerged

Figure 2. The relationship between the kind of alliance and the tendencies of representation
as part of the diversification strategies of the productive activities of community organisations. One of the emerging activities associated with tourism has been the production of other agricultural products. In many cases these were developed previously to the involvement in self-managed tourism but are now included in the production of “typical dishes” offered for tourist consumption or as local products to take away. The most common seminal activities that can be identified in the Webpages of organisations include handicrafts and native plants in the case of Peru, and coffee, cacao, and vanilla in the Mexican cases. Currently, the main strategies for their economic betterment involve other tourism related activities such as hospitality services and guided tours, which provide multiple possibilities for the members of the organisations to be involved in complementary economic activities (Chok et al., 2007).

In the majority of projects the emphasis is on sustainable ecotourism, and culture is added with more or less importance in the representation of the tourist product. This is especially visible in the abundance of still pictures and videos in which the activities shown connect with the beauty of nature and the outdoor adventures this provides for the tourist. Cultural representations are incorporated especially to represent experiential activities and always have an ecological background.

In the cases where archaeological sites are part of their territories, the emphasis is put on the link between ancient and contemporary culture. This link provides some images that are used by organisations, even if in some cases the designs and symbols are not related to their specific ancestral culture. For example, in the Mexican cases, Mayan and Aztec images are sometimes used to frame other Indigenous cultures, which are different to the ones tourists will witness when travelling to the sites. The local culture is not always evident in the marketing of the project itself.

Most cases include stereotypical representations of what would globally be identified as the ‘authentic’ culture. Although these images are possibly still part of the actual contemporary cultural practices, with expected differences between the performances for tourists and their practice in community life, the selection can be interpreted as a response to the imaginary expectations of the tourist. This is understandable especially considering that some of these projects are competing with mass tourism where that postcolonialist imagery abounds. Counteracting this, it is possible to find representation in the same Webpages of organisations where these types of images are not necessarily prominent. In this sense, the Webpages incorporate complex representations that can be interpreted as the dynamic tension between clients’ and partners’ demands, and their own processes of decision making concerning how to ‘sell’ their cultural images.

Although the presence of postcolonialist images could be interpreted as a loss of cultural control, in other sections of the Webpages where they are marketing products, identities and organisations, it is evident that the introduction of accompanying messages conveys a sense of not being subalterns. This kind of meaning clearly contrasts with the promotion of conventional tourism in which the ‘Indigenous host’ is disempowered. The different attitude can be associated with the already mentioned appropriation of social justice discourses by the organisations, which are also providing alliances from groups able to offer funding, training and mediation with the international market, which is one of the possibilities for the organisational sustainability of indigenous groups.

From the Web stories, which include how organisations were created, it is evident that the continuity of these kinds of alternative initiatives depends also on the existence of political processes in which Indigenous organisations have to fight against local and national exploitation and marginalisation. Considering the crucial role the alliances play, it is possible to suggest that this cultural control can be viewed, in these cases, as a co-construction between external supporters and organisations. From the data available on the Web, it is difficult to be certain if the meanings are imposed, negotiated or autonomously created. However, there are still some indications, for example, in the use of pronouns in the texts, that signify a change in voice implicitly showing the existence of dialogic processes. This representation in which others are voicing the characteristics of the culture, people or organisation is more common in commercial and governmental alliances. For example, the Webpage of the Mexican governmental body that supports Indigenous alternative tourism (National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples) includes an introductory video to promote each of the tourism sites they have supported financially. The introduction begins with a non-indigenous voice referring to the Indigenous people as “they”, and then an indigenous spokesperson tells the audience who they are, including their identity as an ethnic group and as an
organisation. Finally, the speaker refers to the characteristics of the tourist product they are offering (e.g. http://www.cdi.gob.mx/ecoturismo/chiapas_misol_ha.html).

From the perspective of cultural control, in terms of Bonfil's conceptualisation, the existence of postcolonialist representations or external involvement cannot be interpreted as necessarily loss of cultural control. In many cases, it might be a strategic discourse appropriation in which tourists' expectations are fulfilled independently of their authenticity in terms of live culture in the communities. In that sense, it becomes autonomous culture. What is sold to the tourist may or may not carry authentic meanings, in the sense of being original (Wang, 1999), but it definitely becomes part of the life of indigenous peoples in terms of their everyday life, which now includes these interactions with the tourist.

An important finding, common to all cases, is the integration of ecotourism and cultural tourism, and the prominence of the marketing of nature over that of the culture in the offer. The emphasis on natural resources is not surprising considering the significance of the environmental movement, which is prominent globally and represents another area of funding to tap into. Furthermore, environmental concerns are constitutive of the alternative market and one element of the nostalgic search for urban "civilised" travellers. Beyond these obvious points, the way the nature/culture nexus is established can be considered an important non-stereotypical way of representing indigenous culture.

The nature/culture nexus highlights deep values from the cultural matrix of Indigenous peoples (Bonfil 1987a), i.e., this nexus allows them to construct themselves, their culture and organisations as knowledgeable and thus as educators of the "civilised world". Associated with this form of empowerment, an important point to highlight is the fact that from the perspective of Indigenous deep culture, care for nature implies ownership and control of their land. Therefore, this might be interpreted as a political statement. I would dare suggest that for these projects, the territory offers more attraction as adventure tourism, and culture is simply a bonus which is there anyway, so it may as well be mentioned.

I propose that the displacement of culture by nature in alternative tourism projects, even if not deliberate, displaces the attention away from how culture is represented, opening spaces for Indigenous peoples to represent the tourist product predominantly as ecotourism. In this context, how culture is represented is not so significant since it is not the core of the product. There is thus more flexibility to create superficial representations of their 'authentic' culture and identity in response to many external pressures, while still continuing with their actual cultural practices. These may not be attractive to postcolonialist tourists, given that many have already been influenced by the mestizo-Westernised culture of these two countries. Although these practices can be regarded as their contemporary culture, since they have been incorporated and are under the control of the Indigenous people, this kind of "authenticity" might not successfully attract the postcolonial fascination.

In this context Indigenous tourist agents, as owners and legitimate carers of nature in their territories, become authorities on how culture is represented and how the tourist sites are accessed and used by visitors.

8. Conclusion

From the analysis of the WebPages of Indigenous alternative tourism in Mexico and Peru, it is evident that the tension between postcolonialism and cultural control has not disappeared. In all cases, Indigenous organisations combine forms of representation that are similar to the ones existing in conventional tourism. However, the use of these images can be interpreted within the concept of cultural control as appropriation, i.e. organisations appropriate postcolonialism as superficial culture, while keeping their identities and cultures in other contexts independently of these representations performed solely for the tourist. At the same time, it is possible to find the refunctionalisation of some of those postcolonialist representations as forms of negotiating market demands and community needs. Even if an invention, what is presented to the tourist as "authentic" can be used for other social, political or religious functions which are independent of the tourism activity. These processes necessarily have an impact on the Indigenous societies, but the impact is managed by the decisions of the cultural agents themselves.

Especially significant is the recognition of ecological knowledge as a form of cultural control. The representation of these offerings as ecotourism provides reinforcement of these communities as legitimate carers of the territories in which they live. By highlighting
the nature/culture nexus, these alternative tourism projects offer opportunities for exercising control over their territories and over tourist access to them. It would be naive to expect that Indigenous cultural agents would be so powerful as to stop big tourism developers accessing and taking advantage of the tourism opportunities, especially the use of pristine natural resources highly valued by the imagination of the eco-tourists. However, the existence of economic and political alliances with multiple global and local stakeholders can be seen as a way of increasing their capacity to control their cultural and natural resources, for their own economic benefit.

As an outcome from the negotiation of the existing pressures and tensions under the tourism paradox, and based on their cultural control, Indigenous tourist agents simultaneously preserve and surrender various cultural elements, but also, in the context of their philosophies and values, they innovate practices. As a result, the cultures and identities they offer as commercial products become part of the social dynamic and communitarian politics which turn out to be the autonomous culture under their own control. In this sense, it is important to recognise that the process of decision making involved in the design and practice of alternative tourism by Indigenous organisations can be seen as another way in which Indigenous peoples are struggling against neocolonial forms of domination.

Considering the fact that historically, indigenous struggles for Indigenous rights have been deflected from territorial and political control and have rhetorically emphasised their cultural rights, it is important to recognise the significance of the conceptualisation of Indigenous involvement in tourism based on the notion of cultural control and its nexus with nature. This nexus, as constitutive of their deep culture, can be used to legitimise control and ownership of their territories. Participation of Indigenous peoples as tourist agents instead of commodities can be seen in itself as a political process in which these organisations can claim not just their cultural rights but also, and most significantly, their territorial and economic rights.

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Notes
1 An earlier version of this paper (Coronado, Gabriela 2012) was published in Spanish in Juarez and Ramirez, 2012.
2 Other studies that engage with political aspects of culture and representation in indigenous tourism include Norris Nicholson, 2000; 2000/2001; Grünewald, 2002; 2006.
3 Although in this case I am referring only to some examples that are evident in the WebPages, other cases can be found by searching deeper into their long historical background. One example I found during fieldwork in 2011 in another alternative Indigenous case, not included here, is the support of a business school in training the members of the community to administer the social enterprise.
4 One exception of commercial tourism representing indigenous peoples not as subordinated is the case of Chiapas after the Zapatista rebellion in 1994. In this case the flow of political tourism into the Zapatista region transformed the tourist landscape and the commercial tourism responded by appropriating the representations of the indigenous rebels to attract the politicised tourist (see Author 2007; 2008; Babb, 2010; Berg 2008).
# Appendix 1: Alternative Tourist Projects and Webpages

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